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The background of the cover features a stylized illustration of a Parisian scene. In the foreground, there is a dark, silhouetted building with a prominent chimney. Behind it, a lighter-colored building with a gabled roof and a small tower is visible. To the right, a red flower branch with leaves and blossoms extends across the middle of the cover. The entire scene is set against a textured, brownish-gold background.

Marcelle
OF
The Quarter

CLIVE HOLLAND



NEW
Holland

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N. C. V.
Holland





MARCELLE OF THE QUARTER



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MARCELLE OF THE QUARTER

BY
CLIVE HOLLAND

Author of "My Japanese Wife," "An Egyptian
Coquette," "A Writer of Fiction," Etc.

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Love is not glad nor sorry, as I deem;
Labouring he dreams, and labours in the dream,
Till when the spool is finished, lo, I see
His web, reeled off . . .

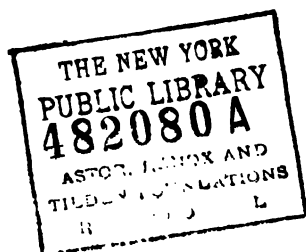
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NEW YORK
FREDERICK A. STOKES COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

IN the following romance of the Quartier Latin a few of the names of streets have been altered ; either because, during the period of time covered by the story, they have been known by two or more designations or for other sufficient reason. In like manner real persons who figure in the book have in some cases been disguised under names other than their own.

Those readers, however, who know the Quartier will probably have but little difficulty in locating the various scenes of the story.

BOURNEMOUTH, England,
January 1st, 1900.

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MARCELLE OF THE LATIN QUARTER

PART I

CHAPTER I

GEORGE BRAND'S "MAGDALEN"

GEORGE BRAND was sitting in the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle which was at the corner of a street opening on to the Boule Miche, sipping a *sirop menthe*, talking with his own particular chum Félicien Louys, and wondering at the pearly glamour of the December sunshine.

The place was crowded, as it usually was at this time when the mid-day rest at the various ateliers and Académies freed for a time a whole host of art students, whose numbers were additionally reinforced by scores of others from the Sorbonne.

Brand was troubled ; and talked earnestly with his companion. He had a fine idea

for his Salon canvas, but alas, had not yet discovered a model who fulfilled the requirements of his conception of the subject, which was "La Madeleine."

The smug "Magdalens" of the schools, and those who appeared at the Art depôts on the register of models, had wearied and disgusted him. Such as they could be found at every turn and in almost every thoroughfare of the vast Babylon by the Seine. The triumphant "Magdalens" crushing their victims, wading through the sea of ruin they had brought about with brazen faces and pride of conquest and lust of folly were not far to seek. But the ideal of his conception, the woman who had paid, she who had fallen beneath the load of her iniquity, she on whom the hand of vengeance had been laid with little mercy, and yet without defacement or utter defilement was not yet found.

In a far corner of the Café a weary-faced girl (for in the shadow of one of the little partitions dividing the room she looked more like a girl than a young woman) sat alone, although several of the students nodded or spoke to her as they came in. A

piece of wreckage on the miniature sea of life pent within the narrow confines of the Café.

It was just as Lucille Monget came in, holding her dress up high in both hands so as to properly display to the gaze of the envious of her sex the rustling silk *jupon* which her *ami* had given her that morning at "Le Petit Matelot," that Félicien Louys drew Brand's attention to the woman in the corner.

For a moment or two he could not discover to whom the speaker referred, for Lucille was standing right in front of her executing a *pas seul* for the delectation of a group of *nouveaux*, and to let off some of the high spirits which had been engendered by her purchase, and her *ami*'s good fortune in persuading old Grandpère Godenot of the hooked nose and melancholy mien to advance something on a "study." When the big, well-fed, mischief-eyed beauty of the studios moved away to her seat near the stove, the sad, weary figure which was disclosed to Brand's searching gaze presented a sharp and arresting contrast.

"There is the model for your picture,"

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exclaimed his companion, laughing at some students who were adding to the noise and gaiety of the company by a clever impersonation of a couple of reigning stars of the Comédie Française.

From the moment Brand's eyes rested on the woman he knew he had at last found the model for which he had so persistently sought.

"Do you know her?" he asked eagerly of Louis.

"Yes; she used to be at Julian's. But that was some four or five years ago. Before your time, *mon ami!* Perhaps, however, you recollect Pierre Delmonico's picture 'Nausica.' It's in the Louvre. Well, she was 'Nausica.'"

"She?"

"Yes. At that time she was one of the finest models for the figure in all Paris. Such a skin, *mon ami!* Such a torso. Helas! Now. But she is still interesting. And to have been what she was is in itself a distinction you can appreciate fully."

"You are right about her being what I have sought," said Brand, after a close scrutiny of the woman, and her listless, de-

jected pose. "Can you accomplish an introduction?"

"Certainly; come with me."

The two men got up and crossed to where the woman was sitting, who looked up as they approached.

"Will Mademoiselle Bonheur permit me," said Louys respectfully, for there is even such a thing as etiquette in Lutetian Bohemia, "to present to her my very good friend, the well-known artist, M'sieu Georges Brand?"

"Yes, with pleasure, M'sieu Louys," she replied, smiling.

And then with the readiness and tact of a woman of her class she entered into the details of the picture for which Brand presently asked her to pose; and like many models, being possessed of a prodigious memory for artists and their works, she discreetly flattered him by reference to his Salon canvas of the year before.

Over a bock, accepted with the good comradeship of the Quartier, the bargain for her services was struck, and from the ranks of the model without employment Marcelle Bonheur once again stepped into the profession of an active model.

The sum Brand could afford to pay her was a competence compared with the pittance she had lately been able to earn, she scarcely at times knew how.

It was arranged that she should commence the sittings at the end of the week, and as she climbed to her room on the attic floor of a house in the Rue Victor Cousin tears of gratitude at her good fortune bedimmed her eyes, and she caught up her child little Marcelle to her breast with unusual tenderness.

On the Friday morning following her meeting with Brand at the Café she came for the first pose; but the artist, though laughing at his own superstition, would not commence on such a day, and so it was Saturday before the picture was begun.

Week by week the sittings continued almost daily till one morning early in March the painting upon which Brand had worked so hard and unremittingly was all but finished.

The spring sunshine, gay, brilliant Parisian sunshine, streamed in at the studio window and fell an oblong golden patch upon the parquet floor; making the light

which came from the huge north window seem cold by comparison.

Outside in the trees of the little garden, which lay in summer like a hidden emerald amid the waste of grey and ruddy walls and roofs of the houses in the Rue des Quatre Forges near the Luxembourg, the birds were chirruping shrilly as though conscious of the coming of spring. And now and again a shadow fell upon the floor of the studio as some stray pigeon from the gardens of the Palace hard by, tempted by the warm sun to loftier flight than usual, wheeled above the environing roofs and darted across the angle of the window.

On a sort of pedestal, placed so that the light from the north illumined her face very completely on one side, throwing the other into deep shadow, Marcelle sat posing. A paper screen cut off all sources of light from the shadow side, though a fold of pink tissue thrown over the top of the screen served to soften any appearance of harshness. She was poorly dressed, and her face, refined by suffering, had a look of great and almost painful weariness upon it. She sat immovable with her thin hands resting idly in

her lap whilst Brand painted with a firm, rapid touch ; glancing up swiftly every now and again to see the effect. He worked steadily and with enthusiasm born of real love for his art ; because the idea he had been for weeks pursuing was now rapidly approaching completion under his skilful and dexterous touch. Once he crossed over to where Marcelle sat and pulled a stiff, ugly fold out of the coarse material of which her bodice was made, smoothing the hood of grey woollen fabric where a shiver she had given had disarranged it.

" You are tired, Marcelle ? " he questioned gently. " Another half-hour, and I shall have finished for to-day. ' "

" Yes," said the woman replying to his question. " I am wearier, Georges, each day. Ah ! if you had known me when I was . . ." and her voice broke as she continued, " pretty and young and gay. Ah ! then you would have painted pictures which would have made you famous. And perhaps you would have taken me on your arm to the Salon on *le jour de vernissage*, and I should have heard maybe some one ask, ' Tell me who is that handsome woman there ? ' And

the answer, "Don't you know? She is the celebrated model Marcelle Bonheur, and the artist with her is the famous M'sieu Georges Brand."

"When . . ." the speaker continued, "I was at Julian's every *nouveau* used to come early and strive for a good position when I was sitting. And for a smile from *mes beaux yeux*, as they called them, or for a kiss when I was coming or going on the stairs." And as she spoke she drew involuntarily the folds of her bodice close across the bosom about which half-artistic Paris had raved. Now, alas! ruined by grief, poverty and the all-destroying enemy, phthisis.

The man once more gently and patiently arranged the disturbed folds of the drapery. He too had passed through the waters, and there had risen up a great pity in his heart for the woman who came to him each sitting with the pencilling of death more marked on her face every time.

On this March morning, as he put the finishing touches on the canvas which he hoped would serve to help him a few rounds further up the ladder of fame he was slowly

but laboriously climbing, he sadly remembered her as she had been only a few months before, when he first met her.

He painted on, however, in silence. Another half hour and the picture would be finished, except for a few last touches which closer criticism might suggest during the next week before sending in to the Salon. The tender, weary face of the woman which had grown upon the canvas would truly carry out his conception of the "Magdalen" of Scripture. The slight touch of modernity about the drapery and head-dress seemed only to accentuate the "feeling" of the painting.

At last he threw down his brushes, and stepped back with critical eye to judge of the effect of his work.

"Yes; it will do." He said after a few minutes' contemplation. And at the words the woman left the pedestal and came to his side. The movement made her cough—a hollow, dry cough he had got to know so well. She placed her handkerchief to her mouth with a motion of mingled terror and disgust. Once before she had not done so, and when she had taken away her hand it

was stained with blood. But this time the white cambric was unspotted.

"It is good, M'sieu Georges," she said simply, in reply to his questioning look. That was the highest praise this woman who had sat to Pierre Delmonico and had been the rage of the Académie Julian could give. And the artist knew it and was satisfied.

"We will rest awhile," he said almost joyfully. "I shall take a holiday for a week. Now we will go to the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle and have such a lunch as we have not eaten for many a long day. Take off this," as he spoke he tenderly removed the coarse hood that had half-shrouded the pale, tired face, because the woman who had worn it for so long time past had been the true "Magdalen" of his conception and achievement. "Put on your hat and come with me."

Into the weary eyes of the woman there came back for a moment a flash of youth, and the glamour of life. Memories of similar *déjeûners* with men who were famous or had since become so came back to her, and she stepped out into the Rue des

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Quatres Forges bravely, with the spirit of discarded coquetry animating her for a few fitful moments. For the time she was again the Marcelle of the past, the talk of the schools, the noisy toast of students. The woman glorying in her beauty and shapeliness. The cynosure of male eyes, and the envied of others in her profession. The sunshine breathed into her a temporary flood of life, her spirits revived with an ominous deepening of the flush dyeing her transparent skin. Brand noticed it and shuddered apprehensively.

"How good the sun is!" she exclaimed as they turned into the busy Boule Miche. "If . . ." and then she paused suddenly. What good were vain regrets? Continuing hastily with a touch of almost childish recklessness in her voice, "Let us be gay; merry, for who knows but to-morrow we die."

"Hush," said Brand. "Let us not talk of dying. I have finished my work. The sun is shining, even the trees are coming into leaf to welcome us. And when we have ordered the *déjeuner*, we will build air castles together and discuss the new picture."

But the woman at his side knew better than he that the sunshine was but a fickle emblem of life, and that the trees would not for her change from tender to stronger and more virile green.

There was quite a little crowd of artists at the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle. The not too large room abutting on the Boulevard was crowded to repletion. Some, revelling in the spring sunshine, and more daring than the rest, had ventured to lunch at the little white-topped tables outside. These spied Brand and his companion approaching from afar off, and those who knew him (for his picture was common property, and, from his air, experienced eyes guessed it was finished), set up a shout which brought several boisterous models and their *bons amis* from their seats inside.

Brand passed through a cross-fire of good-natured chaff. Louys, a tall, slight young fellow with a profusion of black hair; lazy, clever and good-intentioned; too indolent to work, and too well provided with this world's goods to need to, was there, as yet uninspired with a real love for art.

"Hail to the famous painter, M. Georges

Brand," he called out, rising and spilling half of the wine from his glass as he waived it on high.

"See the look of conscious virtue on his face," shouted an English compatriot and student with smiling raillery.

"Drinks?" queried all who knew him and many who didn't.

Brand nodded and went inside.

Then for a time the smiling, ubiquitous *garçons*, whose now passably clean aprons played many parts in the day and by night, were kept busy.

Marcelle, tempted though she was because of the distinction of intimacy which such a course would infer, would not consent to the lunch being served in a *cabinet particulier*. With a strange flash of pride she would not permit herself, frail, ailing, death-doomed as she was, to be associated, as she knew she would be, with this handsome, young, vigorous man who had been kind to her. No, she was *bonne camarade* with him, nothing more.

They sat down at one of the little tables for two which had become opportunely vacant, and Brand ordered such a lunch—as

lunches go at the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle—as she had not enjoyed for many a long day. Not, indeed, since she had fallen under the spell of Jacques Belot, had lost her good looks, and therefore her living, and had been deserted by the man who had fascinated her girlish imagination.

Even the *garçon*, who had become accustomed to many strange things and sights during his two years' service at this students' haunt, and to the vagaries of the volatile patrons of his employer, raised his eyebrows involuntarily at the elaborate menu which Brand composed from the *carte de jour* and his inner consciousness. A two-franc lunch was the extent of the tether of most of the *habitués*, and sometimes this sum was only forthcoming after diligent search in out of-the-way pockets for stray sous and ten centime pieces. And the wine! Not once since he had been there had he been called upon to produce Veuve Cliquot at twelve francs fifty for lunch. For dinner, once or twice. But lunch never. And Chateau Lafitte to crown it all. He glanced at Brand with a view to discovering the cause of this seeming aberration. Had

he gone mad, drawn a big prize in the Ville de Paris Bonds, or had some obliging millionaire purchased a picture at a fancy price? But even in the latter event Veuve Cliquot was an expensive old lady, and would soon dissipate M. Brand's good fortune if he were not careful.

George Brand knew Jean and his ways well. His good-tempered face, which had not yet entirely lost the bronzing and glow of the mistral and sunny south, and on which the worries of attending to the commands of an unconscionable number of students sat lightly, was as an open book.

"It's all right, Jean," he exclaimed laughing, "though I am not expecting to make anything on the Grand Prix, and have not tumbled into a fortune."

Jean showed his white teeth and hurried off to execute his orders.

Around them were the usual frequenters of the Café. Students whose unkempt hair and far from spotless linen told the tale of their struggle for existence whilst gallantly pursuing the most fickle of mistresses, Fame. The women or girls with them told much the same story; many of them were

young, not a few of them were pretty, one here and there lovely. They were mostly loyal enough to their *amis*, their dingy attire and unkempt appearance being an exact counterpart of the latter's well-worn suit, shabby felt, and loose bow-tie, from which the freshness had departed forever. They ate their *déjeûners* at 80 centimes, washed the food down with *vin ordinaire*, were gay, and thanked Providence or the Latin Quartier equivalent that it was not a lunch at 50 centimes down at the "Poisson Rouge" that they were eating instead of Père Grandet's celebrated one at eighty.

There were a few men present who could have afforded a lunch at some more exclusive and expensive place, but they had grown from student days to be a part of the Café, and never felt inclined to wander away from Père Grandet's *établissement*, where, when they had but a few *sous* to lay out on *bouillon* and bread, they received a wide, jolly smile, as though they were likely to sit down to ten courses and drink of the best his cellar could provide. Amongst the women, too, there were a few in fresh and brilliant-hued hats, and silk or lace *jupons*, the

latter, lest they should be overlooked (the hats could not be), displayed by the simple device of turning up the dress skirt across the wearer's knees. The quality of their costumes telling the success of their particular *amis*, and of the influx of the "filthy lucre," which many, true to their mistress, Fame, and anxious only for her smiles, professed to despise, and quite a number got along very well without.

Jean was not long in coming. He appeared silhouetted for an instant against the light of a doorway, and a moment later was at Marcelle's side with a *hors d'œuvre* in the form of sardines and cucumber.

The elaborate little *déjeûner* of two did not pass unnoticed amongst the crowd of Bohemians. Reckless extravagance, when money was plentiful, was, of course, nothing new; but Brand had never been given to this sort of thing, and he certainly had "arrived" sufficiently long ago not to have been driven into such expenditure by a mere access of high spirits.

Fêted like this, Marcelle for the time being became a new woman. One of those strange flickers of life, brilliant, enchanting, but how

sad! for which her malady is known, permeated her. She glanced around with a new interest in life, and those who lived it with her. She remembered not without the usual pang her little day of smart millinery and silk *jupons*. For the time she was still a beautiful woman. The wine put a sparkle in her eyes and called a deeper flush into her cheeks. She became, in the warmth of this crowded room, amid the laughter and gaiety of careless life, something of what she had been five years before. Death was driven off for a while, and even his pencillings became less perceptible on her face.

In a pause of the clatter of plates, and knives and forks, she caught the remark from a dark-bearded man who had been a *nouveau* at Julian's when she had her first engagement there.

"Marcelle is still quite pretty, and more *spirituelle*," he said to his *vis-à-vis*, a girl of the Quartier, to whom the latter term could not be held to apply.

His companion shrugged her plump shoulders, and threw a glance downwards at her own less ethereal form.

"No good now for the figure, *certainement*

ma belle," said the artist, "on whom the action was not lost; " but she would make a charming study of a *sœur de charité*, or *religieuse*, which you, with your magnificent proportions, would not."

"No?" said the girl mockingly, and a bread pellet shot from off her forefinger, impelled by her thumb, lodged unerringly in his beard.

"Perhaps not, *mon ami*. *Pour moi*, I am content to be the 'Venus,' 'Bacchante,' or even merely 'Baigneuse' of my very good friend and clever artist, M. Philippe Morneau, till I become consumptive and—*spirituelle*."

She raised her glass in good-humoured mockery, and drank the few drops of wine it still contained, "to the success of the famous painter, Philippe Morneau."

The irony amused her companion as it was intended to. He had not yet "arrived," nor seemed likely to do, and Grandpère Godenot was almost the only one who bought his pictures, though some of them, it is only fair to state, did eventually find their way into the shops of dealers of a higher class on the further bank of the Seine.

Morneau said nothing for a few minutes,

occupying himself by making a rapid pencil sketch of Marcelle as a sad-eyed *religieuse*, on the surface of the marble-top table, which much scrubbing, cigar-ashes and age had rendered dull, and an excellent medium for the purpose.

His companion watched him with the interest which a long association with artists induced. So long as he did nothing more permanent of this other woman, whose fragility was so great, and in a way unflattering, a contrast to her own coarser charms, it did not matter much. There were already a half-score of sketches on this particular table, some faint, some fairly clear, others fresh and vigorous. For Jean did not think it policy or complimentary to clean away too quickly these "impressions" of *habitués*.

A feeling almost of tenderness came over Brand as he watched Marcelle eating opposite him, and he felt conscience-stricken that he should have ever thought (as he sometimes had) of this woman with repugnance. It was the inevitable physical revolt of his vigour against her decline.

"To the picture!" he said in an undertone, leaning across the little table and rais-

ing one of the tiny glasses of Chartreuse which Jean had put on the table with the dish of uninviting dried fruits.

"To the artist!" Marcellere plied, raising the other glass.

Then the great wave of sadness which was inevitable broke in upon her. The shadow of impending death struck a chill to her heart, even amid the gaiety around her. She too had been happy. Poor fool! And yet she had been no more foolish than those around her, perhaps even less. Only more unfortunate.

Brand finished his *liqueur*. Jean approached to ask if there was anything else he could obtain for Monsieur. The bill! "That would be soon ready, M'sieu le Propriétaire was himself making it out."

When it was brought Brand scanned it down, and took out the money, with a franc for the *garçon*, who opened his eyes at such liberality.

Turning to Marcelle, Brand said:

"Shall we stop a few minutes, or go?"

"You stop; here comes M'sieu Louys, but I must go. I have not taken Marcelle into the Luxembourg Gardens for several

days. This one is too bright and fine to be missed."

Brand did not want to stay, so the two got up and left the Café together.

"I will come and see Marcelle," he said, as his companion turned to the left to take a short cut through a by-street.

Five minutes' walking brought them to the Rue Victor Cousin No. 5. Brand noticed that his companion looked very tired.

"Let me run up and fetch Marcelle."

"You do not know the way, and besides the child would be frightened at not seeing me. No; I will go up, whilst you await me here, M'sieu Georges." And with that the speaker vanished into the narrow doorway.

Brand had not long to wait.

In a few minutes he heard a thin, childish voice saying, "Maman, is M'sieu Georges really down there?" as they passed an open window of the staircase a floor above.

"Oh, M'sieu Georges, is it really you?"

And the child in her baby excitement hurled herself off the doorstep into the man's strong arms.

"Yes, of course. Do I look like old Croque-mort?"

Little Marcelle laughed and shook her wavy curls that shone like gold in the sunlight which fell over the roofs on to that side of the street.

"No, no! Only like kind M'sieu Georges," she exclaimed, and then her face clouded over at a memory his words had aroused.

She nestled close to his ear, saying softly so that her mother could not hear, "You will make dear Maman better soon, won't you, M'sieu Georges? I heard old Sophie saying the other day that old Croque-mort would soon come and take her away to the *cimetière*."

"Yes, yes, I will make her better. Sophie was only joking. See, I will carry you to the Luxembourg, and we will look how the leaves are coming on the trees. And I will play games with you whilst Maman sits and rests on a seat in the sun. And then the band will play, and we shall forget all about what that stupid Sophie said."

The child rested her head on his shoulder, her curls falling over them in a ripple like sunshine on disturbed water.

But she kept her eyes upon her mother with strange, child's intuition, as though she still feared that she would vanish from her side.

CHAPTER II

THE GIFT OF DEATH

WHEN George Brand returned to his studio he sat for some time at a little distance from the picture on the easel, smoking and contemplating it. He had done some good things before, in fact, since he had "arrived" he had never done altogether bad ones; but he knew as he regarded the face of this woman he had painted that it was "life." It was sad with the joylessness of despair, weary with the hopelessness of the knowledge that with every breath of the consuming lungs the fell destroyer of beauty and ugliness alike, of virtue and frailty, was just so much nearer.

The smoke wreaths floated upwards and then spread into a fan of blue-grey vapour as a draught of air from the French window which opened into the little garden caught them. A pride at what he knew was almost

a work of genius flooded the artist's soul. It was not given to many to find their ideal in the flesh of any model. The strange *gaie* women of the Quartier, brilliant, coquettish, beautiful, singularly attractive many of them, were not seldom as far from the ideal of absolute physical perfection as from moral. This picture, which had grown during the last few weeks under his sympathetic touches, was a better lesson than that taught by all the eloquence of even Père Fabien of St. Sulpice.

It was the face of the Magdalen who had paid. The weary eyes looked out at the world for forgiveness, the troubled brow pleaded for the caress of pity, the wan features would have touched the heart of Christ, or even of the far less compassionate human judge.

Outside the shadows were falling, and the sun was retreating below the red roofs, vanquished by Time for another night.

Over the city evening was throwing her spring mantle of pearly haze, and enveloping the Seine and its banks with a blue-grey diaphanous mist.

As the gloom thickened in the studio the

face in the picture seemed at first to stand out with increasing clearness, and the dark undetailed background faded away. Then as the light faded the face took a cast of mystery till nothing save the luminous, appealing eyes remained. Still the artist sat musing.

He wondered vaguely whether he ought not to have offered this sad-eyed "Magdalen" of his conception a home. It could not have been for long, and he knew that if it had not been for this circumstance he would never have entertained the idea. At the back of his mind was the conviction that an artist should not marry—that was, at any rate, until he had so far "arrived" that Art was his servant and not his mistress. In his early student days a few women had passed across his life leaving scarcely a trace of their influence or his dealings with them. But Marcelle could at least have served him as well as old Vivienne did, and he would have been rid of the latter's temper, and freed from the suspicion that his marketing was done on lines of some profit to herself. Old Vivienne worshipped and lectured him by turns, she kept the studio clean and not too exasperatingly tidy, which

would have brought down on his head the derision of his *confrères*. She was a character, whose whims alternately amused and irritated him ; but she was not a lady, and Marcelle at least had the seeds of ladylike behaviour in her, seeds which with a little fostering would have grown into something so tangible as to have separated her from the vulgar model of the Quartier, and ensured that the respect which Louys and the rest paid her out of chivalry would have eventually been paid in admiration.

This train of thought concerning Marcelle, however, was interrupted by the sound of footsteps coming along the passage to the studio door. It was then that Brand realised for the first time that it was almost dark.

"Come in," he called out in response to a somewhat peremptory knock, which he at once recognised as being Vivienne's.

The door opened and the woman entered. She had a flickering taper in her left hand, for she had come to light the gas, and to get Brand's accustomed cup of coffee.

She was an oldish woman—her age could not have been less than fifty-two—with a

round, peasant face on which natural good humour bred of the soil of Picardy, and an acerbity acquired by age and disappointment in life since her husband fell with a host of others of the 71st battalion in the ever memorable sortie of the 19th of January, 1871, seemed to be perpetually struggling for the mastery. She had keen grey eyes, black hair now thickly strewn with silver, and an alert manner and figure.

In reality she was devoted to Brand, whose comparatively regular habits and mode of life were in strong contrast to those of other students and artists for whom she had acted as *femme de charge* at an often too variable sum per month, which had induced and encouraged in her the making of the commission on supplies which Brand suspected but submitted to uncomplainingly.

"You will have your coffee, M'sieu Georges?" asked Vivienne with "a-more-to-come" intonation in her voice.

"Certainly, Vivienne," he replied. Adding, as the old woman still lingered after lighting the gas, "Well, what is it now?"

Doubtless it was some trivial matter. The

charcutier has forgotten to bring the sausages, or the charcoal for the stove had not come.

"M'sieu Georges," commenced Vivienne somewhat awkwardly, and with a solemnity hardly justified by the charcoal theory, "since you went out, a lady, a young and pretty lady, has been to see you. She would not leave her name with me, but said she would call again to-morrow about the same hour. She said she knew you."

Then, with the indiscretion of her class, the old woman told some of the pretty young lady's confidences which enabled Brand at once to trace his visitor's identity.

It was evident that this lady did not meet with old Vivienne's approbation, for she smiled with as near an approach to cynicism as her present features would allow. She also watched Brand's face very closely in the uncertain gaslight to see how he would take the announcement.

It could, however, have told her very little. Brand was not a man to be read easily at any time, and least of all, when an announcement of a disturbing nature had been made.

"Very well," he said, "bring the coffee at once, Vivienne."

And with that the old woman had to be content. But she went grumbling down the passage to the kitchen, wondering whether this smart demoiselle who had looked about the place as though it belonged to her would be the means of putting her old nose out of joint, and whether the same demoiselle was *un page d'amour*, which M'sieu Georges had before her time torn out of the book of Life.

When Brand heard her close the door of the little kitchen which he rented with the studio, a bedroom and a cupboard-like apartment now sacred to the storage of materials, odd studio properties, and cast-off clothing, he rose and paced up and down restlessly.

It was as though a grave had opened at his feet.

In the far corner of the studio, near the white porcelain stove behind a dusty pile of canvases, some finished roughly, some merely sketches or commencements of pictures—which Fate destined should never reach completion, was a piece of brown millboard with

a sketch in oils upon it. He had not seen it for three years or more ; but he knew exactly what it was like, and could have laid his hand unerringly upon it when the pile, which shut it in against the corner of the wall, had been removed. He wondered if old Vivienne in her periodic but not too energetic cleans-up had ever come across it, or whether it had not even been turned or dusted during the years since he had placed it there. By and by he would see ; but not till after Vivienne had brought in the coffee.

He sat down again and waited for her footsteps to come along the passage. His eyes fell naturally upon the canvas on the easel, and equally naturally he began to compare his memories of the resurrected woman with the living—though only pictured—presentment of the other. It was not a nice memory which was called up by this woman who had thus again sought him out.

He remembered that it was much such an evening as the present one, only in the old studio, small, dirty, none too well lighted, though its main window was theoretically all right. He had come in from his work at the school tired, out of spirits, and sick from

the smell of varnish, turpentine, oil paint, and humanity which had pervaded the crowded *atelier* in which he had been working,—to find her gone. On the little pin-cushion, which was in the shape of a heart, bought for her at the huge Magasin “Petit Saint-Thomas,” was pinned a piece of drawing-paper, with a few jaunty parting words scrawled upon it.

His rage, for he was only a trifle over twenty, had at first known no bounds. For a week it was *absinthe*, the reckless wooing of the chrysoprased witch, and then a rapid and certainly unusual recovery which hurled him back into his work as a means of forgetfulness. But that was in the past, and had been almost forgotten till Vivienne’s announcement served to raise up the ghost of the forgotten woman from the cemetery of his dead memories. As he waited for the coffee he wondered vaguely how he could ever have felt the severance so keenly. It is never easy to decide such things afterwards.

“Voilà, M’sieu Georges !” and Vivienne placed the steaming coffee on the little ebony Algerian table at his side. She threw

a glance of scrutiny at his face as he turned, startled by her abrupt entry. She did not evidently esteem the expression reassuring, for when she returned to her kitchen she sat down to think.

Brand gulped down the coffee tastelessly, and then, lighting a candle at the gas, went down on his knees before the pile of canvases in the corner.

The sketch he was looking for was almost the last, a piece of board about eighteen inches by twenty-four. When he had drawn it from between two larger canvases he got up and took it to the light. The dust of this neglected corner of the studio was thick upon it, and quite obscured the colouring. From habit he drew the sleeve of his coat across the surface and gazed fixedly at the face disclosed. The masses of dark hair, the finely but firmly marked brow, the contour of the throat, the poise of the head, the fascinating, mischievous face. Yes, just as he remembered it. It was an easy matter to reconstruct the real woman from even this unfinished sketch. Such memories having a tedious habit of completely reviving.

And to-morrow! What should he do or say? What could she want with him after these years? Well, what did it really matter?

Repugnant to him though she was, he was vexed not to feel sure of himself. Bah! and he tossed the painting back into the obscurity of the corner with something after all approaching a pang of regret, though his face was hard and indifferent. He would go out and see whether he could find Louys or Vignari, and perhaps look in at the Closerie de Lilas and there amid the riot of the reckless dancers purchase forgetfulness.

Next morning Brand entered the studio early, as it was his intention to put the few finishing touches which might be necessary to his picture at once, so that it might go to the frame-maker's, to be fitted into its frame, without delay. There was but little work to be done upon it. The background needed stippling a trifle darker in places so as to concentrate the light upon the pale, sad face, but that was about all. Whilst he worked he wondered if his promised visitor would really come. At the bottom of his heart he wished she might not. No good

could result from such a meeting, and it was sorry work at all times stirring the ashes of a burnt-out fire. He was just about to leave the house to get *déjeuner* at Père Grandet's when he was stopped by a terrified *gamin* who asked nervously if he were M'sieu Georges Brand.

"Yes," he replied.

"Then would M'sieu have the goodness to come at once to Rue Victor Cousin No. 5, as Madame Bonheur was very ill, so ill that——," and as he trotted along to keep up with Brand's hasty strides the little messenger told amid gasps all that he knew.

A knot of women talking volubly and gesticulating sympathetically stood round the door of the house in which Marcelle had her room. They made way for Brand, however, before he reached them, and fat Madame Donjon, who had been telling her neighbours particulars of the event which had put the house in such a stir, led the way, panting and gasping out her grief, up the narrow, dirty stairs. At last they reached the door of Marcelle's room, which was on the fifth floor, right under the sloping red roof.

The woman lay quite still on the poorly covered though neat bed.

"*Elle est morte*," ejaculated Madame Donjon at his elbow, theatrically. "Alas for the poor little Marcelle," dashing aside the easily called-up tears, which rolled in sympathy down her fat red cheeks.

Brand pushed her gently aside and stepped into the room. Madame, with an unexpected accession of delicacy, closed the door after him, and he was alone with Marcelle's body and Marcelle's child.

The latter sat dry-eyed and stunned by the bedside, holding her mother's hand, and wistfully looking for the smile which would never again light up the pale wan face. The Magdalen of life, as well as of his picture, had been called to the Judgment bar, before which also the man who had deserted her would be arraigned.

On his entry, the child sprang towards him with a cry as nearly approaching joy as her poor little desolate heart would allow. He took her up in his arms and carried her to the window from which the twin square towers of St. Sulpice stared back at them gloomily from the distance.

When he had quieted the child as best he could, he turned back to the woman on the bed. She lay with a rough shawl around her head, just as he had painted her in the picture, only some of the pain lines and weariness had been smoothed out of the face. On the pillow, clasped in her hand, was a letter. He felt no surprise that it should prove to be addressed to him. He sat down on the one chair the room boasted, with the child on his knee, her fair hair, all dishevelled for lack of the usual morning touches, flooding his shoulder.

The letter bore no date, but had been evidently written recently, and ran thus :

DEAR GEORGES (I call you so in my heart, possibly for the last time) : It is the finish, or near the finish, of everything. My terrible cough, which drives sleep from my eyes, and leaves me weary of life, and only anxious to be quit of it, but for one thing, has told me the end cannot be far off, and young Doctor Sichel admitted that I was not mistaken, when I saw him to-day.

“ I shall die happy, that is, as happy as any one in my state can, knowing that you,

my ever-good friend, will do what I ask. I have never, like other women of my kind, had much money as the price of remorse, weary days and death; but what little I have been able to save is invested in the Paris Funds. It will help keep little Marcelle for some years, and then perhaps God, who has exacted so bitterly from the mother for her frailty and folly, will have some pity on the child. To you, *cher ami*, I leave her. You are good, you are kind; you will take her and cherish her as your own—a gift from the dead woman whose picture will make you famous. You are an artist, you will succeed; and I am venturing, in trembling humbleness, to ask Our Lady of Pity that she may bless and keep you, and *p'tite* Marcelle.

“Far away in Auvergne, there are some who loved me, but I never wish them to hear of me. Let them die thinking of me, as I know they will, perhaps sorrowfully, but never unkindly. Thinking of me as one who has past out of sight, but whose memory is sweet, because they do not know.

Let *ma pauvre p'tite* grow up believing the mother she will soon not remember, or

only as a vision, a good woman, and you thus earn the eternal gratitude of her who will soon be gone. I sign myself only

“MARCELLE.”

Brand read the letter twice. In the presence of the dead woman, whose face he almost fancied appealed to him mutually, what could he do but take the Gift or Burden (whichever it should turn out to be) that Death had placed in his hands? For a time, at all events.

A slight shuffling on the stairs outside told him that Madame Donjon was still there, shifting the position of her over-heavy body on to the other foot.

He called out to her, and she promptly entered.

Her eyes were moist with the peculiar moistness of the peasant of a fat and placid habit. Somewhere in her too-obtrusive flesh, she felt a true pang of sympathy for the motherless child.

“She died quite quietly,” she began before Brand could speak, crossing herself with the vigour of the truly unregenerate; “there was no time to send for the Father.

I came in, as I had seen or heard nothing of her since last night. She looked queer, though I only thought she was asleep, and so I called Mademoiselle Brinvillers. We soon found she was dead, with the child, *pauvre p'tite*, asleep at her side. We——."

But the listener interposed to put an end to the threatened garrulity, by saying:

"Pardon, Madame, but will you be good enough to tell me if any message or papers were left by Madame Bonheur?"

"No, M'sieu, none. Except that which I see M'sieu already has in his hand."

"It says," says Brand, "that it was Madame's wish that I should take charge of and act as guardian to *p'tite* Marcelle here; and in accordance with that wish I shall take her now to my hotel, and will return later to discuss the necessary arrangements for the interment with you, Madame. Meanwhile, we had better have the door locked."

Madame Donjon acquiesced willingly enough. She had been wondering all the morning what was to become of the child, and to her *petite bourgeoise* intellect no satisfactory solution of the subject had as yet presented itself.

It was so good of M'sieu Brand to take the poor little Marcelle—so very good. She hoped Marcelle would see how kind it was. Children were never too young to show gratitude. There! but she ought to know if anyone did; she, with her abnormally large family of four; two imps who, with jolly faces, played in the gutter all day, and two girls who were already looking for *amis* amongst the students down at the sarbonne. Ah, indeed, she ought to know the responsibility most generous M'sieu Brand was taking upon himself if anyone did.

To all which conversation little Marcelle listened with wondering eyes and incomprehensive mind. All she understood was that if Maman were really asleep, and would never would wake up again, she would rather be with kind M'sieu Georges, who took her to play with the other children in the Luxembourg, than be with Madame Donjon, with her red face and noisy voice, whose two *gamins*, Pierre and Philippe, used to tease her, and sometimes called her bad names. So she only cried softly, just as she had been doing for the last ten minutes, when the door closed behind them, and Brand

carried her down the long flights of dusty stairs, and away out into the street.

She walked even gaily at his side to the Rue des Quatre Forges, for trouble sits but lightly on the head of a child of four, and not for long when the sun shines and the birds twitter and fly up from the roadway just when one thinks they will surely be run over.

Vivienne answered their knock, and looked surprised to see Marcelle the younger alone with her master.

Her looks betrayed the question she was on the point of asking him. Brand nodded for her to say nothing. She was to come to him in ten minutes, as he had something particular to tell her.

The picture of the dead woman was gazing from the easel at them when they entered the studio; but, fortunately, the open door leading to the little garden, the sunlight outside, and the noise of the birds caught the child's attention, and by the time she came back from her play on the little grass plat the canvas had been taken down and turned to the wall.

To accept a situation gracefully was not

old Vivienne's *forte*. In her heart of hearts she loved all children with the intensity which sometimes eats into the very life of childless women. But when Brand told her his hastily thought-out plans, the strain of acerbity with which she disguised her attachment to him and her love of children was given vent.

"M'sieu, you must be mad," she exclaimed; "what can you do with a child—a mere *bébé*. Madame Bonheur must have thought you good-natured indeed. Why didn't she leave it to its——" But something in Brand's face told her she had gone far enough on that line, so she paused. "Well, M'sieu Georges," she recommenced, "who is to 'do' for the poor child? Where is she to sleep? What is to become of her? You have never much time for anything save *vernís*, paints and models."

There was a softened tone in the old woman's voice which told Brand that she was merely throwing difficulties in the way—as she very frequently did—for the pleasure and credit of surmounting them.

"Providence," said Brand, smiling into the eyes which were already welling with

motherliness, "will look after her. Providence that is," he continued, "which takes the form of a good old woman known by the name of Vivienne——"

"That's all very well," the old woman interrupted, "but——"

"And if she won't," resumed Brand, "well—we won't think of such a thing. The child is in the garden. Listen! She is happy again. Go and embrace her. And then we will clear out the little room; there is plenty of space for the lumber in here. It will do for the child. There, go out to her——"

"But the soup?"

"Go out for a moment and then come back, and tell me if I am to turn the child out of doors or send her to the good Sisters of Bethlehem."

Old Vivienne passed with simulated reluctance through the window out into the sunlit patch of garden.

Brand was curious enough to peep from behind the angle of the window frame.

The old woman's step quickened as she went down the narrow, tiled path. She called, "Marcelle, p'tite Marcelle. Come

to your grandmère, come, my *pauvre p'tite enfant*, and give me a kiss."

And then the child's fair head and the grey one of Vivienne became quite close together, and an old heart quickened into life under childhood's magic of grief and trust.

The man at the window turned away smiling. He had not seen a victory over Vivienne so quickly won before.

CHAPTER III

AN UNHALLOWED GHOST

BRAND and little Marcelle were taking their soup together at a table in the corner of the big studio always set apart for meals when the former had them at home. The child was quite gay; the motherliness which had sprung to life in old Vivienne's bosom in the garden had already won the child's heart, and for a time had caused forgetfulness of her loss and grief.

There was something a little approaching awkwardness at first in the man's dealings with this romantically acquired responsibility; but Marcelle was no stranger to the studio, and had soon settled down as though nothing could be more natural than for her to be with "Good M'sieu Georges." Her laughter seemed to match the sunlight outside which was flooding beautiful Paris with early spring radiance. And when she

spilled the soup from the spoon which was too large for her rosebud mouth, and made a deprecatory *moue*, Brand laughed in sheer sympathy.

Old Vivienne fussed in and out at intervals to see how they were enjoying the soup of which she was a noted maker. Whilst she was in the studio, wiping the child's mouth with the *serviette* which did duty for a bib, the bell in the forecourt rang imperiously. It was like the pull of an impudent gamin who would swiftly vanish round the street corner, or of some one not accustomed to wait.

Vivienne glanced at her master. "It is surely the *demoiselle* of yesterday," she said. "Will M'sieu see her, and shall I take little Marcelle with me into the kitchen?"

"Yes," replied Brand, as the bell rang again impatiently. "Show mademoiselle in here, and see that we are not disturbed."

He heard the child's footsteps patter down the passage alongside of Vivienne's more leisurely ones, the kitchen door close, and the woman go unhurryingly to the entrance.

The murmur of the caller's questions and

Vivienne's replies reached him faintly, and then in a moment or two there was a sound of approaching footsteps, the tip-tap of high Louis heels in contrast to heavier and less vibrant footfalls. The studio door was thrown open by Vivienne with no very good grace, and in a tone which contained a trace of menace she announced, "Mademoiselle Mathilde Sievinski, M'sieu."

Brand looked up with studied carelessness. The sight which met his eyes was not an unattractive one. A Parisienne who knows how to dress in the latest fashion and who does not scruple to show at the same time individuality seldom fails to appear charming.

The lady, whose age was about four-and-twenty, placed her parasol upon a chair, and then stood for a moment or two regarding Brand somewhat curiously. In fact, as one would an animal of superior force of whose intentions one was not quite sure.

However, when Vivienne had closed the door she advanced to where Brand sat, with the elegant indolent gait of a woman accustomed to being looked at, and to lolling in carriages.

He rose and offered her a chair stiffly. She seated herself, and, crossing one knee over the other and resting an elbow on the arm of the chair, she gazed at Brand as though expecting him to open the conversation.

As for the man, he had not the slightest idea of what to say. He only knew that the woman whose beauty had conquered him in the past, and who had injured his pride irreparably, had come back more beautiful than before, and that she was sitting there regarding him with the glance of amusement and challenge he used to know so well.

Mathilde drummed impatiently upon the parquet floor with one foot, disclosing her smart boots and lace *jupon*. At length she exclaimed, "Well!"

The tone of the monosyllable conveying a world of disappointment and inquiry.

Her voice seemed to hang in the air for a moment or two, and then all was silent again.

She was very fascinating, this dainty growth of the *demi-monde*, versed in the arts by which men's reasons are enslaved and better natures corrupted; but Brand

realised almost with a start of joy that he had never forgiven her treachery. One is quite safe even with a beautiful woman so long as one has a grudge against her.

Perhaps the woman recognised this, for she suddenly sat up straight in her chair, banishing the indolent pose she had at first assumed, and regarding curiously the man who stood a few feet away from her, with his hands clasped behind his back.

"Come, Georges," she said at length, as though they had been conversing, and she wished to propitiate him, "you do not seem pleased to see me. I thought you would have given me a warmer welcome than this. *Ma foi*, you used to greet me warmly enough. Ah! Can I ever forget——"

"I fancy, Mademoiselle," interrupted Brand, in studiously even tones, "that you do forget the event which happened, let me see, four, or was it five, years ago. And, to be frank, I am wondering what is your reason for favouring me with this visit."

He spoke so calmly, and regarded her coquettish figure and dainty raiment with such coldness, that she suddenly became aware of the difficulty of the task she had

set herself. She received a stab to her vanity when she comprehended how dead had become the fire she once could have kindled so easily.

She changed her plans.

"No," she replied brokenly, "I have not. But I was very young, a mere child, and we were poor, you and I——"

"Yes," he broke in, "and I was a fool, and a *poor* fool was no use to you. I could not give you all the fine clothes and the jewels your grasping, miserable soul coveted, and so—It was just the same story that has been going on since the first woman discovered the market value of her beauty. I picked you out of the gutter, gave you all the name that is required in the Quartier, saved you from utter ruin, and you——well, you know how you repaid me——"

"Stop, stop!" exclaimed the woman passionately, "you may be speaking the truth about that. But I loved you all the same, and we cannot always afford love, or conquer what is bred in us. And I thought, and I thought—— You were poor. But there, never mind. And I have been afraid to come back. And then you said we should

all starve, or be killed, if the Prussians came, and yet you wouldn't or couldn't leave, and I was afraid of death. Oh, so very afraid of death. I used to dream of it at night, and so when he came and tempted me—only for a time, just till the Prussians had been beaten back, and Paris was all smiles again instead of gloom, I went. And now I have come back to you. Don't tell me it is too late, and," getting up impulsively she came close to him, "am I less beautiful? You know what I was. Is it too late?"

Her breath fanned his cheek, her eyes, in which tears were swimming—false tears, no doubt—were gazing into his with unnerving appeal. When he had lost her she had the beauty of a perfect but scarcely opened flower. Now——

She would have placed her hands on his shoulders, but he drew back sharply. He was glad again that he hated her.

He knew that she was lying in most that she had said, why, he did not know. She had left him not because of famine or death, as she had said, but for the other reasons. Because he was poor, because her love, if it

had ever had separate existence from a mere flash of passing gratitude, had not been of the kind to stand poverty. Many women of the Quartier would doubtless have done the same—but not all. Now he had succeeded ; she had come back again, with that tale of being afraid to do so before. Bah ! It was all too grotesque. He had no pity for her, no, none.

“Listen,” he said coldly and harshly. “All that you have been speaking about is past. Let it alone. You took your own way. If we had quarrelled I might have forgiven you ; but we did not. There is no more to be said, and, Mademoiselle,” taking up the parasol as he spoke, “allow me to conduct you to the door.”

It is not easy for a beautiful woman to accept a defeat, and for a moment Brand’s cold civility stabbed her, and hurt her vanity as though he had struck her across the face. For the time being love or passion for this man (she did not stop to think which) now so cold and unapproachable but who had once been hers, sprang up in her heart. She would not yield to circumstances without a last and desperate struggle.

She threw herself at his feet, using all the arts of old which had never failed to bring him penitent and plastic to her side, reiterating all the falsehoods of her class, pouring out a torrent of impassioned appeal in which at last threats lurked, but all to no purpose. The man stood cold and immovable over the grave of a dead love.

"Mademoiselle, I beg of you not to so distress yourself, and to consider this interview at an end."

The words fell down upon her like particles of ice. They chilled her passion, and when she rose there was a dangerous flash in the eyes which a moment ago had been streaming with tears of injured vanity.

She dashed all traces of emotion from her face with her scented handkerchief. The quicksilver in her Polish blood enabled her to recover her self-possession with marvelous celerity.

"Thank you, M'sieu," she exclaimed in a hard voice, stretching out a hand for the parasol which, when he had given it up, she smoothed carefully. "*Au revoir*. Remember Mathilde Sievinski does not forget."

As she passed down the short passage

Marcelle's voice in laughter over some grandame's tale Vivienne was telling her sounded through the kitchen door which was ajar.

Mathilde paused, a look of comprehension crossed her face.

"Ah, M'sieu Brand," she said bitterly, swinging round, "you were not long in consoling yourself for your adored Mathilde's loss. Oh, what cheats and *cochons* men are!"

Almost with her last word the street door slammed to, and she was gone. Brand returned to the studio heaving a sigh of relief. His visitor's Parthian shot did not disturb his equanimity. Her misconstruction of the child's presence amused him. Her exit had been singularly like that of a heroine in a Porte St. Martin drama; possibly she had rehearsed it; probably she was even now feeling satisfied with it.

The window leading into the garden had blown to, and there was a heavy scent of musk or patchouli in the room, so he crossed the floor and threw the casement wide open.

This odour, which he knew so well, revived keener memories than even the face of the woman to whom it belonged; recollec-

tions he was anxious to once again push back into oblivion.

She had dropped her glove, a dainty thing in pale gray suede. It seemed almost a pity to destroy it, and a line from a new novel he had picked up at the Art Club, "there is always something savouring of romance in the scented glove of a pretty woman," came into his mind. But it emitted the same perfume as had clung to the air of the room until the soft, pure wind of the garden had swept in to dissipate it, so he took the glove, and opening the door of the porcelain stove, he dropped it remorselessly in. If it came a cold night, he could easily put a taper to the fuel, and there would be an end of it. Anyway, it could not trouble him, or arouse unpleasant memories from the depths of its white prison.

Mathilde Sievinski, pattering along in the sunshine over the uneven pavement of the Rue des Quatre Forges, was wondering where she had dropped her glove, using no very gentle language over the expenditure of five francs, fifty centimes which its replacing would entail. She also speculated

vaguely whether Brand, if he found it, would put it aside with an access of tenderness he had not permitted himself in her presence, or whether he would grind the dainty, unoffending thing into the floor beneath his heel. On the whole she rather inclined to the latter view, for he had not shown any inclination towards romance during the interview, and her memory served her sufficiently to enable her to call up several scenes of passion in the past.

Brand did not call Vivienne immediately, but sat down in the chair to think. There was an element of mystery about Mathilde's reappearance, which puzzled him completely. He was a successful artist, as such go in the Quartier; but he was not a rich, or even comparatively rich, man, and he could well believe that so far as his circumstances were known she knew them. Half his income would not suffice to keep her in such clothes as she was wearing, so why had she come? Why had this butterfly of the Faubourg reappeared to trouble him, to revive memories, and to attempt a rekindling of the sentiment which she had once inspired? Had he been rich, the matter

would have been easy of solution, but he was not; and after he had smoked a pipe of the vile tobacco of the French Republic, he was as far off arriving at a satisfactory solution of the affair as ever.

That Marcelle's little laugh should have caused Mathilde to jump to the conclusion that he had "settled down" amused him immensely. It had put a finishing touch to a scene which all along had bordered on melodrama, and had, indeed, only been saved from farce by the evident earnestness of the woman's desire for reconciliation.

A tap at the door and a soft voice asking, "May I come in, M'sieu Georges, may I come in, I want to?" put an end to his deliberations. It was little Marcelle, and when he called out, "Yes, come in, *ma cherie*," the door was pushed open impetuously, and the child came in with a rush and climbed up on his knee.

There was a great deal to be done before this little charge could be comfortably settled in. Vivienne put her foot down firmly against the child sleeping, as he had at first proposed, in the little lumber room off the studio.

"No, M'sieu Georges," she said with decision, "it will never do. The poor little thing will be frightened to death. She is so far from both of us. No! Let her sleep with me till you can have another room near mine. Perhaps Monsieur Delphine, the poet, will be giving up his. Indeed, I only wish he would, as he does nothing but pace up and down late at night declaiming his verses and speeches to the Republic Française, which he says won't listen to him, and a small wonder, for one does not always want to be reminded of death, murder, suicide and love affairs which end with a pistol-shot or knife."

And so it was decided that Marcelle should share Vivienne's room.

When all this had been settled and the child had gone out contentedly to play in the garden, Vivienne with the privilege of an old *femme de charge*, ventured to approach the subject of her master's late visitor.

"And the demoiselle, M'sieu, Georges? She did not stay long."

"No," replied Brand, "and you need not trouble yourself, Vivienne. She is unlikely

to return ; but if she should, say that I am not at home."

"Very well, M'sieu. But she was very pretty and stylish, and must have at least her residence on the Faubourg St. Honoré, and I thought, perhaps," the old woman went on mendaciously, "she had come to commission M'sieu to paint her portrait. She would have made a pretty picture, to which M'sieu's talent would have done excellent justice."

"No," Brand replied, wondering why he should trouble to explain to the woman. "Madame wanted to see me on business, but it was not about her portrait that she came. And she is never likely to come again."

"No, M'sieu?" said Vivienne, still curiously; "but I think I will seek Marcelle and see if she will come with me to the baker's. We shall want more bread, now there is a mouth extra to fill. And such a one! *Ma foi*, you should have seen her eat."

Brand laughed. Though the woman probably cheated him, she was careful of his interests in other ways, and it was evident that she wished him to understand

that more money would be required and why.

When they had gone out, Marcelle talking gaily because it was such a treat to go to the baker's, Brand decided to proceed to the Rue Victor Cousin to see Madame Donjon about the interment.

The matter was soon arranged; already she had spoken to the coffin-maker at the corner of the street, who, she assured Brand, was patronised by the *élite* of the Quartier, and he had promised to be ready by noon next day.

"One or two of the dead woman's friends have been to see her," said Madame; "she looks simply beautiful laid out with a bunch of *immortelles* in her hand. Should her man, or would Monsieur Brand himself choose the plot in the Cimetière Montparnasse?"

Brand intimated that he would, and then climbed up to the attic floor to take a last look at the dead and to take possession of any papers which she had left behind relating to her affairs.

He had a strong man's horror of death, so after a pitying glance at the white, still

thing on the bed, he set about his task of going through the few articles she had possessed. They were not numerous. A few poor pieces of cheap jewelry, a bundle or two of letters, some papers relating to the money in the Paris Funds, a few sketches which artists had made of her and presented to her. That was all. Clothes she had very few, and these and little Marcelle's he left for Madame Donjon to separate and forward only those which would be of use.

He tied the papers up in a parcel, and after a parting glance at the woman he had befriended he closed the door, and crept, with silent steps out of respect for the dead, downstairs to Madame Donjon who awaited him not a little flustered by the responsibility which had been thus thrust upon her.

A walk along the Boulevard St. Michel, Boulevard Montparnasse, and Boulevard Enfer, a few minutes conversation with the *fossoyeur*, a short distance traversed amongst the tottering monuments of forgotten and neglected tombs, and the newer ones still smart with wreaths of painted tin and *immortelles*, and his duty was done. The grass looked greener in this particular spot, and

the old man at his side had promised careful attention—till he forgot, as he always did sooner or later according to the amount he received—to the grave of Madame.

On his way home along the Avenue de l'Observatoire he came across Louys near the newly erected fountain. He was criticising the sea-monsters of Fremiet, which were still the wonder and delight of the *gamins*, who when a gendarme happened not to be in sight, would try to toss pebbles down their gaping throats from which the water spouted.

Louys had already heard of Marcelle Bonheur's death. That most expeditious of Quartier Latin telegraphs, gossip, had made him aware of the fact as he was taking his *déjeuner* at Père Grandet's. The woman who told him had laughed. Not a few of the more morbid looked on death as a *bon ami* to be met with open arms when the time came ; and that Marcelle had been waiting for him a long while past everyone knew. A girl in the far corner, who was galloping along the same road, turned a little paler, but then she was not like the one who had laughed, strong and good-look-

ing still, and *une amie* of quite a successful and well-provided student. It was all very well, she did not feel inclined to laugh over poor Marcelle, and she ventured to say so to the long-haired *nouveau* who sat beside her.

Brand told Louys what he had done. The latter shrugged his shoulders and whistled. The latter habit he had acquired from his companion.

It seemed to him rather Quixotic and amusing for Brand to adopt this child of his dead model. A good many of his friends might misunderstand the situation—that did not matter much of course—but when he became “the famous (instead of well-known) artist Monsieur Georges Brand,” and the *Figaro*—not that any one thought much of the *Figaro*—noted and recorded how his tie was knotted on *le jour de vernissage* it might be awkward. It might even prevent a grand alliance with wit, beauty and wealth; the opportunity for which sometimes came to successful artists, and which such might embrace; but a poor man who loved his mistress Art—never. Well, it was none of his affair. He admired the chivalry of the act though he could not approve of it.

Georges had his best wishes, and *la petite* Marcelle promised well as a future model, although her golden locks would never fit her for a Madonna *role*. But then to be sure there were more interesting studies than Madonnas, so that would not matter.

The two men turned into a narrow street, and sat down at a little café under the shadow of St. Jaques du Haut Pas to talk the matter over, and incidentally to drink coffee and smoke.

CHAPTER IV

THE PICTURE OF THE SALON

PETITE MARCELLE had soon made herself quite at home. There could be little doubt about it. When she was not teasing Vivienne for biscuits or to narrate one of the marvellous tales of which seemingly the old woman had such an inexhaustible store, she was in the studio with Brand watching him paint, playing the while with Mimouché the long-furred Persian kitten Monsieur Louys had given her from the bird and animal store in the Rue St. André. Her mother, even the memory of her, seemed to have passed almost completely out of her childish life, now that the former had been laid to rest in the Cimetière Montparnasse. For the memory of children is sometimes mercifully short.

During the first few weeks after Marcelle Bonheur's death, Brand often thought of the

time when he might have to revive in her child the memory which had after all perhaps merely lapsed. But that was a long while ahead, away in the dim future into which no one could peer. The bundle of letters he had found had told him little more than Marcelle's true name, and the fact that she was well-connected, very well-connected, for a dweller in and model of the Quartier Latin. But these far away relatives of hers she did not wish informed either of her life or death ; and so he felt secure in the possession of the child, which made a little element of sunshine on the dullest days. It was but a step from her name of Bonheur to that he sometimes called her, " Petite Mademoiselle ' Sunshine ' ", and Vivienne laughed at the change, and Louys, ransacking his volatile heart for sentiment, approved it.

The picture had been packed up and sent off to the Palais de l'Industrie, and Brand waited for his ticket. It was not likely to be a green one, but the position assigned to him was still a matter of some very considerable importance. Amid the wilderness of 2,500 accepted canvases it was quite

possible for even a masterpiece to get lost. He had no fear but that his "Madeleine" would gain acceptance, but he hoped for a good place ; where the dead woman might perhaps preach a lesson to the well-dressed crowd.

He had started work upon another picture the week after Marcelle died. A single figure study of a woman putting up her brown-red hair in an alcove of a Roman bath. He had his own theory as to the correct modelling of flesh illuminated by reflected light, a theory acquired and studied during rambles along the Quai D'Orsay and Quai Voltaire on hot summer days when the women, half hidden in the dark recesses of the floating wash-houses, heedless of the sun and glare from the surface of the Seine, rubbed linen back to spotlessness with strong bare arms and shoulders bathed in reflected sunlight.

Marcelle was a true child of the Quartier, a studio was no *terra incognita* to her, and so she played about whilst he painted, gazing wonderingly with wide-open, blue eyes at the marvellous immobility of the model, Félice Carrefours, who could sit for fifty

minutes, as they said at Julian's, "without winking an eyelid." There was something uncanny in it to her childish mind. She knew very well that she could not sit still fifty seconds, even when M'sieu Georges offered her a gingerbread monkey with golden head to do so.

Playing in the sunlight on the sill of the open window, she used to wonder how it was, and at last arrived at the conclusion that Mademoiselle Carrefours was like the woman with the water jar in the Luxembourg. During the ten minutes' rest which came at the end of each hour of posing, or oftener if Brand wished to rearrange the drapery, Félice would catch Marcelle up with a cry of pleasure, and would hug her to her, and then the child would sometimes say naïvely, "After all, Mademoiselle, you are not like the woman with the waterpot in the Musée, for you are quite warm and she is cold. How do I know? Because I touched her one day when the old man wasn't looking."

And then Félice would laugh, and hug her all the more, till her own red-brown locks mingled with the child's golden ones;

forming a pretty picture that Brand some day half-intended to paint.

It was really wonderful how very little Marcelle interfered with his life. And the child and he soon got to understand each other completely. A strain of elfishness made her an enigma occasionally to Vivienne, much as the latter had begun to love her; but to her "cher M'sieu Georges," or "papa," as she sometimes called him, the elfin tricks were neither tiresome nor incomprehensible. Many of his friends laughed at him, and what they were pleased to call his "adoption." But they, too, in the end came to regard the child as an attractive feature of Brand's *ménage*, and showed no disinclination to call in and tease and play with her.

The opening day of the Salon arrived. Long before, Brand's fears had been set aside by the receipt of a white ticket, which meant he was in with a No. 1, and opened visions of a possible medal, and a certain honourable mention which would be worth something in his negotiations with the dealers. Grandpère Godenot had seen very few of his canvases for three years past, and

that was in itself a distinction. But a medal at the Salon would help him materially up the ladder of artistic renown. On "Varnishing day" he had found his "Une Madeleine" well hung in a good and—wonderful to say—suitable light in one of the chief sections of the northern wall of the building, near the entrance.

The opening day was brilliantly fine, one of those May days when Paris, looking her best, is bathed in bright sunshine, and overhung by a pale blue sky, only flecked here and there with fleecy "mares' tails," which serve to give depth to the azure vault above. A keen, though not unpleasantly cold, wind swept across the Seine, stirring the dust on the Pont de la Concorde, and then, after whirling round the obelisk, careered with mild spring madness up the Rue Royal till checked by the sombre façade of the Madeleine. The trees in the boulevards, those in the gardens of the Tuileries, and those lining the Avenue des Champs Elysées displayed their delicate green foliage, as yet tender and unsoiled, with coquettish rustlings. An endless stream of vehicles swept into the Place de la Concorde from the

several contiguous streets, and mostly turned up the broad tree-lined avenue bound for the Bois or the Palais de l'Industrie. The brilliant sunlight struck the spokes of the revolving wheels, the brass and silver mountings of the harness, and the glazed hats of the cabmen, making innumerable and blinding points of light, bewildering to the eyes. The dashing phaeton or victoria of the latest "society" beauty drove side by side with the over-crowded and shabby fiacre from Arrondissement 12.

Brand and Louys had walked along the Quais, and had reached the Salon by way of the Pont des Invalides. They speedily passed in at the turnstiles and mingled with the crowd of well-dressed nonentities, and often ill-dressed celebrities, which had already begun to throng the main Gallery devoted to painting. The sun streaming down through the huge glass roof added to the warmth of the building, already becoming unpleasantly heated by the crowd of human beings, which in places had scarcely elbow room. The great artist J. Lefebvre, several of whose students had this year particularly distinguished themselves, was standing talk-

ing to the Comtesse de Rogny, smiling and receiving her congratulations modestly. He caught sight of Brand, of whom he had always had a good opinion, and of Louys, who was a pupil; and after a moment he bade adieu to the fascinating Comtesse and came over to where the two were standing looking at a huge canvas of Puvis de Chavanne.

"I have to offer my congratulations," he exclaimed, shaking hands with Brand. "I have been looking at 'Une Madeleine.' It is superb. There is an idea behind the face. Others evidently agree with me, for one can scarcely approach it. Ah! M. Brand, it is something to have accomplished so much. Oh, yes, you have worked hard. Three years? Six! Well, what, after all, are six years when one is so young, has enthusiasm, and loves Art as a mistress. Nothing! My congratulations again. I hear that you will be medalled."

Brand had said little. It was something to be seen talking with Lefebvre; to be seen doing so with his arm linked through one's own was distinction.

The famous artist squeezed his hand, nodded to Louys, and vanished in the crowd.

"*Ciel !*" exclaimed the latter. "What heat." Adding with a laugh, "It is like the other place. But let us go and see the picture."

They found it easily, but as M. Lefebvre had told them, it was hemmed in by quite a little crowd.

They stood on the fringe, near two women in extravagant and *outré* toilettes, who were accompanied by a young sous lieutenant of artillery.

"I do not see anything in it," said one of the women in a languid, indifferent tone. "Who is this M. Georges Brand?" glancing at her catalogue.

"An Englishman," replied the lieutenant, adding impudently, "though one would imagine a German, *ma chérie*, to hear you pronounce the name."

The woman laughed, hit the speaker playfully across the knuckles with her catalogue, and reiterated, "I see nothing in it. A woman's head, and that not even a pretty one, 'Une Madeleine.' Come! There are many prettier pictures to be seen. Let us see what Rochegrosse has. I adore Rochegrosse, he knows how to paint a woman at her best."

"And worst," said the man cynically. "You will understand this picture better, *mes amies*, twenty years hence."

"You are impertinent, Monsieur," rejoined the woman with the catalogue, laughing. "You deserve punishment. You shall take us to dine at the Café de la Paix. Shall he not, Lisette?" turning to her friend.

"Most certainly."

And they all three laughed.

As the silken skirts brushed past him, Brand whispered to his companion, "Twenty years hence. They will both of them be less paintable than Marcelle, though more painted."

A line of spectators soon formed behind Brand and his friend, and they were driven to a place nearer the crimson rope which protected the picture from injury. Two girls of the *petit bourgeois* class were criticising it brutally and contemptuously, or rather the woman whose face was depicted, proving, as Brand remarked, that there is a mine of truth in the saying, "The greatest enemies of fallen womanhood are the women who have managed to keep upright."

Men seemed to take the picture more seriously. People with more real artistic instinct, or who assumed an artistic pose, praised it. A widow, with white hair shining like a silver coronet beneath her heavy crape was crying. The artist turned away. Perhaps she had a portrait of another Magdalen locked close in her mother's heart.

As they passed along, Brand heard a woman say to a man, obviously not her husband, "I am sorry that I have seen it, Jacques."

And the reply was a laugh. "What nonsense! It is worth a score of Ledas and smug Venuses. It is very fine."

And the answer "Yes; but you are a man and don't understand. It will haunt me like the Beatrice Cenci. I wish I had not seen it."

"What nonsense!" her companion replied shortly, adding with another laugh, "Let us be gay,—gay, for to-morrow we all die."

"You are too horrible," exclaimed the woman with a shudder.

"No; only philosophic, Emilienne."

The mantle of night was fast enveloping

Paris ere Brand and Louys, who had religiously "done" the principal pictures, crossed the Pont Neuf on their way home. They had stayed till the last moment in the Palais de l'Industrie, and then had not hurried ; for in the Seine at dusk there was an element of beauty and mystery which never failed to interest them.

The last rays of the sun rapidly sinking behind the heights near Versailles, struck a hundred blazing points in the windows of the houses on the Ile de la Cité, and reddened the grim pile and twin towers of Notre Dame. A slight mist rose from the surface of the river, fringing the Quais as with a ragged blue-grey garment of gauze. The silent Bateaux Parisiens crept stealthily through the bridges zigzagging across from one station to another. A stream of people flowed noisily along the Quai des Grands Augustins to the bottom of the Boule Miche, up which the majority of its atoms lived. They had been drawn by the fineness of the day to the Salon, and the Bois on the right bank of the river, which, except on special occasions, possessed little attraction for them. The restaurants of the Boule

Miche, Boulevard St. Germain and the contiguous streets, were now filling rapidly with hungry and thirsty students, their *amies* and the *petite bourgeoisie* of the Quartier.

The Café de la Bonne Nouvelle was packed already when Brand and his companion reached it. But packed is not a synonym for "full" in the Quartier Latin, and a struggle, with several perilous balancings on the edges of chairs, at last landed them, perspiring, and followed by a chorus of Allô! O La las! in a place which Jean had managed to keep for them literally at the point of a greasy carving-knife.

In a far corner a girl was singing one of the latest songs of the Boulevard with vulgar, stupid words, which sent the listeners into roars of laughter because they themselves were happy, and a lilting tune strung together by some poor hack with two-score of popular airs mixed up in his overtaxed brain.

A cloud of tobacco smoke mostly of Petit Caporal made the heavy air visible, and girls who were yet unseasoned, and a few *nouveaux* from the schools, coughed irritatingly.

"Stop it!" shouted an American to some of these in French of execrable accent. "You're blowing the smoke away, and we shall be able to see each other. And then Susette here won't be able to do up her—" the rest was lost in the girl's shrill scream.

"*Ohe le pauvre nouveau!*" cried out several of his companions, as a pale-faced youth struggled out to breathe the fresh air.

"O la, la!"

"Allô!"

"O ma tante,
Ella est ma banquière.
Ma chère tante
Est la banque pour moi,"

sang some one on the spur of the moment, as Jean presented the slate, on which he had swiftly mis-added the bill.

Jean, when reviled in the best slang of the Quartier, professed with a worried air an ignorance of the higher branches of addition and multiplication.

"Ah, *mon ami*," exclaimed the shaggy-haired singer, "your education has been neglected in the right way, that is, in the interests of M'sieu le Propriétaire. You never make an error in favour of the customer."

Jean smiled.

A *garçon* in the students' café has to put up with a good deal of chaff, in the hope of getting the grain of wheat in the shape of a two-sou piece. He hurried away to get a plate of Potage Pâte d'Italie for an Italian model from Bouguereau's who was drumming impatiently on the top of the table in front of her with a white metal spoon and whistling the air of a new *chanson d'amour* of the café concerts. When the soup came in, its small pewter tureen battered and scratched with the ill-usage of riotous customers, she ate it greedily, as though she had tasted nothing for a week. Brand shivered with disgust as he watched her. Six years of the Quartier had not succeeded in hardening him to the eating of soup in the popular way by even a pretty woman.

"Jean, come here," called Louys impatiently, as that overworked individual hurried past and away into the service passage, notwithstanding his former and repeated calls.

"In one little moment, M'sieu," called Jean, who then disappeared altogether.

"He gets worse than ever," exclaimed

Louys with an expression of comical resignation.

"He has more to do, you mean," said Brand. "That is, *mon ami*, because there are few places where one can get such a dinner at one franc seventy-five even in the Quartier."

"I suppose so," agreed his companion. "Poor devil, he must have sore feet after Sunday, I should think. For we all make for a good meal at Père Grandet's on Dimanche, do we not?"

Just as Jean came to execute the order a puff of air swept in at the glass-panelled door on the farther side of the low-ceiled room, and in the doorway through the cloud of smoke the figures of two police officers could be dimly seen—the Damoclean swords ever hanging over the heads of the women of the Quartier.

"*Les police des mœurs !*" was murmured furtively by several of the diners, whilst some of the *grisettes* present shrank into their corners or sheltered themselves behind their *amis*, fearful lest they should prove the proscribed ones.

The two officers peered in at the door, and

then entered to scrutinise the occupants more narrowly. Suddenly they pushed their way through the throng of students and between the closely placed tables—for space was valuable at Père Grandet's on Sunday nights—and tapped the girl who had been singing so boisterously "*L'amour en passant*" on the shoulder. She gave a cry, and her face went white beneath the rouge upon her cheeks. There was a disposition on the part of her shock-headed companion of Scotch extraction to defend her, and dispute the matter with the police. For a moment one of the not infrequent disturbances of the cafés of the Quartier seemed imminent. Sticks were grasped firmly, and short, students rose excitedly from their seats, shouts of "Down with the police! Do not let them take Lona la Belle! Turn out the lights! Trip up *les cochons*. Hustle them around!" sounded on all sides.

Amidst the din, the girl's own shrill cry of, "Let me go, you brutes," pierced the smoke-laden air.

A table near her was thrown over, the crockery crashing on to the floor and the

glasses splintering into a hundred fragments. A pool of red wine soaked into the sand marking it with a dark sanguine stain. A stick was flourished, and came down with a hollow thud upon the *kepi* of one of the police. He hit back, and the fight would have become general, but for the arrival of a posse of some ten other officers who came into the café with their short swords drawn, and wedged a passage to the side of their comrades.

The other girls were screaming and fighting their way towards the security of the passage leading to Père Grandet's own apartments, and thence into the few *cabinets particuliers* of which his establishment boasted. Their one thought was to get out of the din and smoke, and away from the *police des mœurs* who might possibly wreak their vengeance on them for the resistance being offered by the students to Lona's arrest. Skirts were torn, finery spoiled, hats lost, as their wearers struggled to the end of the room over chairs and tables in reckless plunges and leaps. Long before the girls had been half-carried, half thrust by their *amis* into the semi-obscurity of the service

passage the affair was over. Lona had been half-carried, half-dragged from her would-be protectors into the street, still resisting; but now, conscious that her fate was sealed, calling out "*Au revoir!*" to her friends, and a promise to return in a fortnight.

Neither Félicien Louys nor Brand had taken part in the scuffle. For one thing they were in a remote corner of the tightly packed room, for another such scenes were not fresh to them, and a broken head or *procès-verbal* was not a sufficiently attractive reward for defending Mademoiselle Lona. They watched the three remaining officers—for the occupants of the café were not yet calmed down enough to make a less number safe—taking down the names and addresses of the chief delinquents so far as their ability to distinguish them went, and the two smiled at the circumstantial way in which some of the offenders gave purely fictitious information.

"They will not easily discover Villiers," laughed Brand as that astute young fellow-countryman (who was understood to have expectations from an uncle of severely Puritanical leanings) gave an address of a fellow

student by arrangement, and quite an imaginary name.

"No," replied Louys, "but Lona la Belle is scarcely worth all this scuffle. It is not her first arrest either. But long live sentiment and chivalry, and down with the police. That's good enough logic for half of the hare-brains of the Quartier."

When the police had gone, the girls, many of them with faces rueful over their spoiled finery, came cautiously back to their companions, exhibiting their rent petticoats, dismembered costumes, and dishevelled coiffures to the accompaniment of a volley of violent expletives against the late intruders.

Lona's fate was bemoaned for a short time by the sympathetic few; was joked about by the students (all save her particular *ami* who was both enraged and inconsolable), and then the subject, from which, to tell the truth, it was only possible to extract the most risky of *double ententes* by way of jokes, was dropped for the ever interesting one of Quartier Latin *liaisons*, artistic successes and failures.

Jean had by this time set the overturned table upon its legs, wiped the marble top,

now disfigured by a crack into which spilt wine would run and drip to the floor, picked up the pieces of broken crockery, swept up the shattered fragments of glass, and scuffled the spilt wine into the sand of the floor. He did so with a rueful face, as it would be impossible to rightly allocate the damage, and he felt sympathy with his master, as it did not affect his own pocket. For, he reasoned justly, might he not also arrive some day at the summit of his ambition, and become a *restaurateur* on his own account?

With the settling down of the recently disturbed diners, came renewed cries for Jean, and Jaques and Gonzalo from all sides of the crowded room.

The episode of the police was soon forgotten, and mirth again seized upon students, *habitués*, and models alike. The men had replaced their sticks on the settles or against their seats, had adjusted disarranged bow ties, and mopped heated faces. The women had, with a few deft touches, arranged their dishevelled locks, made a fresh junction with skirtbands, and bodices, ruthlessly torn the rent lace from their *jupons*, and powdered their hot faces afresh at one or

other of the many mirrors which, in frames of meretricious gilt design, served to extend the vista of diners to a wonderful and seeming illimitable extent.

As Louys had once sagely remarked, the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle never looked empty if there were two persons and Jean in it, because of this wonderful array of mirrors.

As the different customers got served, the noise and conversation quieted down, though the rattle of knives and forks, and click of plates, punctuated sharply the snatches of talk on Art, the Salon, and more intimate topics which fell from the lips of the diners between the courses and mouthfuls.

Brand felt happy.

He had succeeded in his ambition and even beyond it; for the rope of ruby cord around his picture spoke more eloquently to him of success than the possible two-sou piece (bronze medal) or even higher Academic awards. Brand's art was seldom spelled with a capital A, that is by himself; it was earnest and strenuous, nevertheless; but it did not take the form of blue trees, impossibly rendered flesh tints, and self-complacency because the great public did not

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understand such pictorial gymnastics. His work was that of a sane colourist who was content to paint not merely what his own eyes saw, but what it might be reasonably supposed the eyes of nine out of ten normally intelligently constituted human beings could see also. Neither his pictures nor his mind "posed"; and he took no particular pleasure in the school of the incomprehensible and martyred grotesques. Technique he had acquired by arduous study and practice, colour he possessed naturally, sanity had been born in him, and with this equipment he was destined to go far.

The walk back from the Salon had made both Louys and him hungry, and they ate in silence for a time, listening to the scraps of picture-talk that reached them in snatches, breaking through the clatter of plates.

Brand's picture was being discussed by several, and in that place, where everyone speaks out with the utmost freedom, and to be thin-skinned is to proclaim oneself a *nouveau*, criticism was neither valueless nor emasculated.

"*Bien*," asked a student in close proximity, "it has colour and intention, but 'Une

Madeleine!' They do not usually look so until they are not worth looking at."

His companion agreed and laughed whilst cracking a green almond, for she had not yet reached the latter state, and naturally refused to think of the time when she might.

"It is one of the finest things in the show," came loudly from a table in the corner at which two American students at Delacluse's were seated.

"I guess so. And when I can paint a picture like that I'm off to the States right away; no error to let the folks have a chance of appreciating me before I'm too dear for millionaires."

Brand smiled blandly at them, for he knew them both.

The "Madeleine" was not for sale, but he had not yet arrived at the time when he could put a fictitious price on his work. That might come.

"You will get five thousand francs for it," remarked Louys, adding, after silent calculation, "Maybe five hundred more."

"Think so," ejaculated the artist. "But that is impossible, *mon ami*, this particular masterpiece is not for sale."

"Not for sale!" exclaimed his companion with a whistle. "Then there must have been some truth in it."

"What?" inquired Brand, shortly.

"That you and Marcelle had been good friends."

"That has nothing to do with it," replied Brand disingenuously; "but I am going so far to indulge myself as to keep the best thing I have ever done."

"For the child, perhaps?" queried Louys.

"Perhaps."

Louys was silent, and Brand began to question in his own mind the advisability of the course he had taken. It had been prompted by the remembrance of Mathilde Sievinski's mistake regarding the child, a mistake that he concluded had made her less insistent upon renewing his acquaintance than otherwise she would have been.

"By the way," said his companion, as they rose to leave the café, "do you know that *la belle* Mathilde has turned up again?"

"Yes; I have seen her. But I thought she had probably left Paris again."

"Not she. Don't you know she has got an apartment near the Parc Monceaux?"

Where she has been the last year or two no one seems able to discover. Perhaps she has been spoiling the Muscovite or intriguing in her beloved Poland."

"I know nothing about her," rejoined Brand, "and I don't particularly want to. Let's change the topic, *mon ami*. All that affair is at an end."

With the rise of the moon, which hung in mid-heaven over Ivry way, the air had cleared. There was now a keenness in it which made a sharp pace attractive. The two men walked up the Boule Miche till Brand's turning was reached.

Two girls shouted out an invitation, "*Donnez un bock, mes amis*," and then, when they saw that Brand and his companion recognised them as students at Ferrier's, ran away laughing across the Place and into the Rue de Medicis in an *impasse* off which they had their apartment.

"Those girls ought not to be about like this," said Brand sharply. "I often wonder why it is when women take up a serious occupation they apparently so often find it necessary to place themselves in equivocal positions whilst pursuing it."

Louys did not suggest an explanation. He was a Frenchman, and having lived for ten years in the Quartier, he classed most women alike, and saw nothing outrageous in the proceeding which had aroused Brand's perhaps insular speculation.

They parted, Louys to spend a feverish hour or two at the Bullier, where all the animal in student nature finds boisterous outlet, and Brand to black-and-white work in his studio—a drawing for "*L'Illustration*."

Monsieur Delphine, Vivienne's *bête noire*, the poet, had left two weeks ago without paying his rent ; so, in consideration of his somewhat dilapidated room being thoroughly done up, re-papered and washed down, Brand had paid the landlord the arrears, and taken immediate possession for Marcelle.

She was asleep when he reached home. He went in, as he always did, and leaned over the little white enamelled cot which Vivienne and he had bought at "La Belle Jardinière." The child's fair hair was spread out over the pillow like a nimbus of some infant saint. Her cheeks were flushed with dreams, and the skin, when he

bent over and kissed her gently, was velvety as that of a peach, and moist with health. She stirred slightly in her sleep and murmured "M'sieu Georges."

A softness crept into the man's face, the *air paternal* of which Vivienne spoke when in garrulous mood.

A vague regret for the episode of Mathilde Sievinski possessed him at such times, and, as he went away, and after shutting the door gently, crept softly along the passage to the studio, it was more poignant than usual.

CHAPTER V

A MENACE OF TROUBLE

THE success of Brand's "Madeleine" carried him from a position of enviable competency and moderate reputation into the front rank of the younger men who were honestly endeavouring to assimilate the best traditions of art with the methods of the modern school. During the time that the Salon was open he had refused several handsome offers for the picture which the public and the critics had for once agreed deserved the highest commendation. It enjoyed an undeniable popularity; and the parties of Cook's tourists, who troubled about the Salon at all, seemed attracted by it as much as by the "Baigneuses," "Venuses," "Les Bains," and similar canvases which are annually hung and serve as texts for desultory preachments on the immorality of French art.

At the close of the exhibition the picture was transferred to a corner of Brand's studio, where it was neither lost nor obtrusive. Marcelle used to gaze at it in childish wonder, half-expectant that the lips would part and the words "*Ma pauvre, p'tite Marcelle,*" which she still remembered vaguely, would fall from them in the tones of her mother's voice. M'sieu Georges, she often thought, must be very clever to paint so well that it seemed as though Maman were about to speak to her.

Sometimes Brand would talk to the child of her mother whilst he was painting, building up instinctively a romance in his endeavours to avoid touching on any point which in after years might give her a clue to her mother's shame and real story. During the first few months of his guardianship he had carefully formulated a system on which this child should be brought up. Once or twice the irksomeness of his responsibility had struck him so forcibly that he had called himself a sentimental, bungling fool to have saddled himself with this girl child, which even the most unsophisticated of mortals must have foreseen would

cause possible, nay probable, complications in the future. But the first few months—like those of marriage—had proved the most trying, and the child, whose very movements and high-pitched baby voice had for a time caused him vague discomfort and annoyance, gradually became a companion in whose society he found pleasure and amusement.

He owed Marcelle, too, something for her conquest of Vivienne, who now seldom gave him cause for offence, and who undoubtedly lavished on the child every farthing which her elastic conscience permitted her to misappropriate from him. Nothing was too good for little Marcelle in her eyes, and it was well that he had succeeded at the Salon. Money seemed to be always flowing out of his pocket, and the excuse was always the same, "Oh, M'sieu Georges, you cannot surely wish your 'daughter' to go shabby, and look like some poor little wretch who owns no father." Or, "You do not understand, M'sieu Georges. There are many things the poor child wants. It is, indeed, a fine thing for an artist so distinguished to grudge five francs for a sunbonnet."

Vivienne, it is needless to state, always triumphed. And little Marcelle was one of the neatest dressed of the children who played with their hoops in the shady *allées* of the Luxembourg, or in summer splashed their frocks at the side of the great pond, the surface of which was crossed and re-crossed by a miniature fleet.

Sometimes, however, she would walk demurely and contentedly by Brand's side along the wide terrace overlooking the lower lawns, at one end of which stood the weather-worn Palais, where the *bonnes* loved to congregate with their little charges, sitting in the sun on chairs or benches with ever watchful eyes on the *bébés* playing on the gravel walk in front of them.

Marcelle was a singularly pretty child, and it was then that Brand realised the reasonableness of Vivienne's extravagance. Very few children were better dressed than she, and none looked nearly so handsome. To be taken for a widower by the ever sympathetic *bonnes* did not annoy him. It was amusing and natural. And Marcelle was a child of whom anyone might be proud.

Sometimes when she played with other

children whilst he sat on one of the green or buff-painted chairs listening to the band, he would overhear some *bonne* questioning her gently concerning her poor dead Maman.

"She is dead, and she was so pretty. And I cried a great deal. M'sieu Georges is so kind, and I am quite happy now."

"And is not the good gentleman your papa, little one?" the *bonne* would be almost sure to ask.

Brand always listened with amusement to the answer.

"Not really, you understand," Marcelle would reply with a serious and somewhat puzzled face at the difficulty she found in explaining exactly. "You see my papa is dead, like poor mamma."

Then if the *bonne*, as was not seldom the case at this point, became meditative, the child would run away laughing and climb up on to his knee, or play with the other children who were racing up and down the terrace with well-bred playfulness. And it was only when the children's mammas were present that the good-natured *bonnes*, whose neat caps generally covered kind motherly faces, showed any disposition to discourage the

companionship. So many of the papas of the children frequenting the beautiful place were dead!

The autumn which followed Brand's Salon triumph saw him in much request amongst those fashionable Parisiennes who affect the unconventional in portraiture. His sitters, if not entirely famous, were good-looking and rich; and, to most artists, these admirable qualifications would have proved sufficient.

He accepted three commissions. One that of a well-known young woman whose caprices had gained her a certain notoriety in the best circles of Parisienne society, and who, as her husband was in Algeria with his regiment, came to Brand's studio unaccompanied for the purpose of feeling a sinner and giving the absent one's relatives something to talk about. Madame Broutilles was a typical Parisienne, a blend of the unconscious hypocrite and the self-conscious *poseuse*, with a kind heart behind all. To Brand she was an interesting study, something quite different from the women with whom he had come into direct contact in the Quartier—women who spoke what

they felt, acted as seemed best to themselves, and regarded life as something out of which they might make a good deal with due regard for their opportunities, and with the exercise of care.

Madame Broutilles was a fascinating butterfly in exquisite clothes, to which she was never tired of referring as "the *fripperies* and *fantasies* with which a clever woman hides her real self." And whilst sitting with her bare, ivory-white shoulders framed in a wonderful sable cloak, watching Brand model the flesh-tints, or paint in her handsome red-gold locks with firm, determined touches, she had taken a great fancy to Marcelle, which translated itself into material form in the shape of boxes of bonbons from Zulatti's, a shop into which only the rich could venture, or little trinkets such as a child would appreciate.

It was a dull time for Marcelle, for Brand worked so untiringly at the three portraits, which, standing on separate easels, seemed already like rival women who would step out of the canvases and insult each other's good looks, that he had little time to spare for taking the child either into the *Luxem-*

bourg Gardens or, which she liked best of all, across the Seine to stroll along the wide streets and avenues of Champ Elysées quarter. He saw a great deal of her, nevertheless, for she had become a veritable studio mouse ; playing quietly, without disturbing him, in her corner, or near the window in the garden.

Little Marcelle was a favourite with all the sitters who, whilst not comprehending her exact position in the artist's *ménage*, accepted her as a pretty plaything of a rapidly rising man. Her frank remarks upon their good looks possessed a piquant flavour lacking in those of more mature flatterers, and her wide-eyed wonder at their fine clothes amused them immensely.

It was not to be supposed that Brand's development into "a fashionable dauber of pretty women," as the most "intense" of his chums put it somewhat brutally, would pass without remark. His protest that it was merely a phase of his art—an experiment for the purpose of gaining experience, and possibly fixing his limitations—did not altogether satisfy those who fancied they saw in him an artist capable of

serious work in the field of *genre* painting and realism.

"Again the flesh-pots of Egypt are intervening between a young man of promise and his greatest possible career," Monsieur Delacluse had been heard to sorrowfully, if somewhat impatiently, declare; and when one of the models, named Corinne, full of mischief, and hoping that Brand would seize the opportunity of saying something to amuse her, repeated the opinion to him, he only smiled quietly, and said that the *maître* was an old fool, and that if he chose to call Madame Broutilles, Mlle. Robin, and dainty little Susanne Delorme, of the Variétés, "flesh-pots," that was his lookout, only they were very pretty ones, that was all.

Corinne laughed, because M. Delacluse was very strict with his models (of which she was one), and consequently was not exceedingly popular. If he had ever had *une affaire*, it must have been so long ago that he had quite forgotten women were of flesh and blood, and couldn't pose hour in hour out without feeling stiff and giddy, and sometimes almost blind, with fatigue, and full

of longing to relieve their *ennui* by harmless chaff with the *nouveaux*.

Louys had been present when Corinne had told Brand Delacluse's verdict. In a sense he agreed with it, for in his case he knew to paint pretty women of good position would have been tantamount to falling in love with them, and this opened a vista of comic and tragic possibilities on which he was well content to cogitate.

Brand laughed lightly enough when he spoke of the subject. He knew he was differently constituted from Félicien Louys, and had buried romance in the episode of Mathilde Sievinski.

Besides had he not Marcelle, and he now often found himself taking the duties of guardianship more seriously than he need.

December the eighteenth saw the first snow fall, and Paris lay like a fairy city under a mantle of shimmering white. The Boulevard St. Michel was one wide, glistening slope from the Carrefour de l'Observatoire to the bridge crossing to the Ile de la Cité. At the corners of the streets the snow had drifted sufficiently deep to almost bury

the ragged *gamins* who rolled and fought each other in it. The façade of the Luxembourg was completely coated, and looked like an immense ornament off a bride cake. The pigeons circled restlessly against a background of leafless trees, and greyish sky; or sought with ruffled feathers amid the snow for the corn which had been scattered on the terrace and had sunk from sight, leaving little dark holes in the whiteness.

Few people were in the streets and fewer vehicles; and of the former those that were women walked cautiously upon the frozen pavement, with boldly raised skirts and faces muffled in furs, or the most satisfactory substitute available to them. If men they moved smartly, with hands deep in the side pockets of their great-coats, and chins well down in the recesses of their upturned collars. Few were out who were not compelled to be by pressing business, or because they were homeless.

On such days students who needed to economise in the matter of fuel did the cheapest thing;—piled all their available clothing on the bed and stayed there. Models and *grisettes* out of employment did

the same, and in consequence, the cheaper cafés were depleted of two-thirds of their usual customers.

Madame Broutilles was to have come for a sitting, and Vivienne had lighted the stove in the studio ere it was light ; but when he saw the depth of the snow which had fallen almost unceasingly during the night till nine o'clock in the morning, Brand decided that he would see nothing of his expected visitor.

He took the portrait, at which he had been working all the day before, down from the easel and replaced it by the study he had only been able lately to work at by fits and starts of Félicie Carrefours. It was impossible to do much on it without the model—half-an-hour's work at most ; so he decided to run over to Félicie's apartment in the Rue de Condé and get her to come as soon as she could.

She was not likely to be up. But he knew that if she could be tempted to come out at all it would be to his studio, which she always declared was the most comfortable in the Quartier because properly warmed.

When he reached No. 106 he learned from the *concierge* that his expectations were correct.

No ; doubtless Mademoiselle was not yet risen. Indeed, who would be if not obliged on such a day ? A day that made one wonder what Providence could be thinking of, if Providence existed. Would Monsieur run up and see for himself ?

Félicie, or as much of her as could be seen above the white sheets, seemed disinclined to turn out. The stove was not yet lighted, and the tiny room was at a temperature very little above freezing point. She explained that she had not been very fortunate lately—for several of her artists were away. Godin had gone to Algiers to paint black women, and Yves Montet was in Rome for the winter—and she had to economise. Adding with a good-tempered, though somewhat reproachful smile, “ And as for you, M’sieu Brand, you have been too occupied with your swell ladies and their fine clothes to trouble about poor Félicie and the higher branch of Art.”

Brand laughed, and explained that he too must consider his pocket rather than always

his inclinations, and with the implied compliment they were friends again.

Félicie promised to come. The English artist was a favourite of hers. He knew when a joke had gone far enough. There was even something approaching respect in his manner towards her who was compelled by force of circumstances to make a market of her beauty of face and form—and this was by no means distasteful.

“*Allez, Monsieur !*” she said in reply to his persuasion, “I will come immediately I am attired. Get the studio so hot, oh, so very hot. And a little lunch. And I will come. Imagine me, and pity me dressing in such an atmosphere as my little apartment. It is too cruel to make me turn out thus.” And the white, well-formed foot—for she could not afford to minister to her vanity by spoiling it in small shoes—which had been thrust out from beneath the bed-clothes tentatively for a moment was withdrawn with, “Ah, M’sieu, people must be mad to get up in such weather. Oh, I am surely frost-bitten already. If it were not for Art’s sake, and M’sieu’s reputation, I would not come. No, that I wouldn’t.”

Brand was half-way down the narrow winding staircase ere F  licie had finished speaking, and threw back the mountain of clothes under which she had hidden herself for warmth, and prepared to hunt for her stockings.

Brand's way lay across the Rue de Medicis and past the Fountain of the Observatory. The tortoises in the basin no longer threw strong jets of water from their reptile-looking heads right across to the centre group of dolphins and sea-horses, for if not entirely frozen up, the water trickled feebly from between their ice-hung jaws. The armillary sphere in the centre, supported by Carpeaux's fine allegorical figures, had a capping of ice and snow, and wherever lodgment for the latter could be found it lay, a soft, white mantle, partially obscuring the dark figures.

The municipal authorities had already put on men to sweep the streets ; and black, narrow, ribbon-like pathways were gradually appearing along the snowy pavements. Brand stopped to speak to one of the men who was engaged near the fountain, an old model of his own who had gone under,

through a too-ardent devotion to raw spirits, and then he hurried on his way back to the Rue des Quatre Forges to prepare for Félicie's coming and tell Vivienne to prepare lunch.

He found Marcelle at the studio window watching the half-frozen sparrows, queer balls of brown fluff, pecking feebly at the crumbs she and Vivienne had scattered for them on the stone step and snow-covered path.

He caught the child up in his arms and held her in front of the old Louis XV. mirror in dingy gilt frame which hung on the wall near the stove.

It pleased him to see the child's golden locks falling upon his shoulder and her rosebud, laughing face resting against his own.

"Oh! papa," she said roguishly, "how cold you are."

"I am going to thaw my nose in your ear," he replied. And then, with the tickling of his beard against her neck, her laughter was so loud and shrill that Vivienne came rushing in to take her away lest she were bothering M'sieu Georges.

In the winter Brand always routed out

skin rugs and carpets, which he had picked up in the shops of the Rue St. André-des-Arts and elsewhere, to place on the floor. They added to the comfort of the models, to the warmth of the studio, and although some of his chums, who worked in huge square rooms on the slopes of Mont Parnasse and roughed it on fifteen francs a week, were sarcastic about them and talked loudly of luxury being the death of Art, he smiled and still bought a new skin when the opportunity occurred.

He, too, when a *nouveau* at Julian's and the part proprietor of a big and draughty studio in the Rue Mayet, had been compelled to be content with an orange-case for a dressing-table, half a bed (the mattress one night, the bedstead the next, turn and turn about), and the insufficient fragment of a looking-glass off a bonbon box, left by a model, in which to do his hair and shave. But he was now glad enough to possess a studio in which neither dust nor chaos reigned supreme year in year out, and into which it was possible to ask a lady without shocking her by innumerable rough sketches of models at the Beaux Arts and Schools, *sans*



everything save shapeliness, nailed boldly to the distempered walls.

Whilst he was arranging the dais and screens to cut off the superfluous light, and stoking the stove, Brand heard footsteps coming along the passage, and a moment later the door was thrown open and Louys appeared.

"*Tiens !*" exclaimed the latter, on seeing the study of Félicie, which Brand had placed on the easel ready for work, "the *révolte* is leaving the 'flesh pots' then, and returning to the classic. I could never understand, *mon ami*, the attraction. Has Madame Broutilles been less than kind lately, or has *la p'tite Suzanne* suddenly discovered that her salary at the Variétés is insufficient to permit of her paying you for her portrait."

"Neither," replied Brand good-humouredly, "Madame Broutilles was to have sat to-day; but it is obvious that she will not be able to keep the appointment. Félicie's picture needs some work upon it if it is to be sent in for the Salon. And finally, it is only the unsuccessful who can afford to be lazy."

"*Merci !*"

Brand laughed, knowing that Louys could not now-a-days put on the cap of non-success.

"But *is* Félicie coming?" queried his friend, doubtfully.

"Certainly."

"The little wretch! to turn out a day like this for you, when I, the other morning, because it was only a bit cold, could not persuade her to shove her impudent little nose outside the door. *Moi !* Such are models—and artists."

"You should keep your studio warmer, *mon ami*. A pretty girl doesn't want to go all 'goose flesh' when posing, simply because the artist is too taken up with his work to notice that the stove is nearly out and she is shivering.

Louys smiled grimly. When he worked he did so with a fierce and unthinking enthusiasm which took little heed of others' comfort. The indictment he knew was well deserved.

He sat down on the edge of an arm-chair, and his face became serious. He had not come in to see Brand with the object of

talking art, but to give him a piece of information which would be sure to prove startling and possibly important.

He rolled some cheap, coarse-cut caporal between rice paper, and, calling it a cigarette, placed it between his lips and lighted it.

"Old fellow," he said at length, "I've got something to tell you."

Brand, who was fixing up a three-fold canvas screen in the corner near the stove, looked round and said "Fire away."

It was probably only some *affaire* of the Quartier, or perhaps Louys had again fallen victim to the charms of some girl down at Grandet's.

But it was neither of these things.

After a pause Louys went on: "I hope that it won't lead to trouble, but I have seen some one about the Quartier who might become, well, inopportune——"

"Mathilde?"

"No. You remember Jacques Belot, Marcelle's friend?"

"Yes," replied Brand sharply, "the cold-blooded scoundrel."

"Let that pass," Louys continued slowly.

"He is here—back in Paris. Hoping, no

doubt, that the business which caused him to vanish has been forgotten. He is making inquiries concerning Marcelle, and has learned about the child he never waited to welcome into the world. Well?"

"If he comes here," replied the listener, "I shall kick him down the steps, and tell him to go to the devil, into whose keeping he ought to have been consigned long ago."

"Don't be a fool. A kick for him may mean a knife stuck between your broad shoulders, my good friend, one dark night by some of the rascal's Belleville accomplices. He may, what you call, 'clear out'; who knows? And if he doesn't, you will find it better policy to make terms with him. He won't want much, and the child would be useless to him—at present."

"Pay blackmail?" exclaimed Brand scornfully. "Not if I know it."

"No, *mon ami*, not that. But, frankly, buy the child of him. He won't want so very much. He will see nothing incongruous in the proceeding, for he would assuredly sell her later on. The capital may be of more service to him now. Have it all in

black and white, and then if the brute should be troublesome, shoot him; no one will be sorry, and the police will be doubtless positively obliged to you for relieving them of the trouble of making an arrest. Think it over. Ah, that is the adorable Félicie"—as light footsteps sounded along the passage—"a heart of stone, a conscience as immaculate as the snow, and the form of a goddess."

The entrance of Mademoiselle naturally put an end to the conversation.

"Ah, M'sieu Louys," she exclaimed with a smile as she entered the studio and caught sight of him, "whatever will you think of me? But M'sieu Brand will never take no for an answer, and I had to leave my warm couch and come whether I wish to or not. Oh, M'sieu Brand, I am frozen—positively frozen! And to think of me posing for the figure on such a day as this. Oh, la, la, such is *la vie Bohème*. Even in the Quartier one cannot do just as one pleases."

She chattered on whilst removing her hat and cloak, and then Louys, who pretended to be annoyed with her and drew down upon himself a torrent of excuses and reproaches

for his terribly cold studio, took his leave. He wished to discover what he could about Belot, for he, too, was fond of little Marcelle. And this Belot was such a brute.

After awhile, during which Brand painted industriously, Marcelle came in. She had heard her dear Mademoiselle was there, and she wished to kiss her and play with her hat and clothes.

"When I grow up I too shall be a model," she declared firmly. But Mademoiselle Félicie only shook her head. There were many pleasanter things than posing, even she knew, and she wished one of them for the child who took everything connected with the studio *au sérieux*, and as a matter of course.

Then one of those studio lunches came, which are idealised beyond belief in Salon pictures and degraded beyond compare in the illustrated journals of the Boulevards, with Félicie wrapped in a long Moorish robe with her feet thrust into studio slippers, and a skin rug round her knees, and Marcelle sitting next to her and taking bits of food off the end of Mademoiselle's fork.

The talk was mostly carried on between

the two, for Brand was less gay than usual, being preoccupied over what Louys had told him. The advent of Jacques Belot had never struck him as being a possible contingency, and now that the unexpected had happened, he was more than a little disturbed.

Of course the man had no real claim upon the child, nor did he probably want her; but he would certainly not be slow to turn to his own advantage Brand's affection for her and determination to keep her. And not to put a too fine point upon it, Jacques, a singularly handsome scoundrel of the Belleville type, would always be a menace to his own peace and the child's future unless he could be "squared" once and for all.

"You are sad, M'sieu Georges," exclaimed Félicie, taking Marcelle on her knee and hugging the child to her breast, "you, who are famous, who are rich, who have *la p'tite* here on my lap to love, and, ah, yes, who can paint. If it were me now! What wonder? I, with no one to love, unless I take at the same time into my heart jealousy lest I shall lose it. Forced very often to hire my body, because it is beautiful, to

any *nouveau* who would paint me, because I cannot always afford to pick and choose. To be painted instead of to paint. Ah, if I could paint! Gay only because it is too terrible to be sad and think. But what does it matter?" she said, burying her face in Marcelle's fair curls. "Let us get to work, M'sieu Georges. The light won't last long. And if it is fine I must go to Delacuse's to-morrow."

Brand rang the bell for Vivienne. The little table was speedily cleared and pushed back into its corner. Marcelle was carried off to hear one of the old woman's wonderful tales, then Brand took up his brushes and palette, and the sitting was resumed.

Félicie had peeped round the corner of the easel ere posing on the dais.

"It is I!" she had exclaimed, delighted as a child. "Make it as like as you will, for I shall feel happy when it is hung at the Salon, and the critics will know that your model was Félicie Carrefours. And perhaps," she added mischievously, "the fine ladies whose portraits you are painting may be jealous. I am sure this picture will be more interesting."

She laughed, and so did the artist.

Who, indeed, she mused, would look at a portrait, except, perhaps, a few critics, students, and the painted one's friends, when they could study the figure; not the *bourgeoisie* certainly, nor the *flâneurs*, and it was they who talked and wrote about what took their fancy in Art and at the exhibitions.

The thought of a paragraph in the *Entre-nous*, or Art columns of the papers which lived on gossip and cheap criticism, kept her amused and happy till the light began to fail, and Brand shut up his paint box and told her the sitting was finished for the day.

Whilst she was dressing to go out, Brand went over to the shabby bureau which an American friend had sold him in his student days for a mere song, and, opening a drawer, took out a ten-franc piece, which he carefully wrapped in paper. It was a little habit he had, shared with most men who knew and studied a model's feelings.

When Félicie was ready he pressed it into her hand. She felt it, and discovering that it was gold, said, with a smile that in a better light would have been worth some-

thing, "Oh! M'sieu Brand. And for three hours only. Ah no!"

"Don't be foolish. If it is too much, trot down to Père Grandet's and have some of the best *bouillon*, and have a good stove to-night, for your apartment was like an ice-house this morning."

"It was, and after all," she replied, laughing up at him from the lower door-step, "it was worth ten francs to turn out. *Au revoir*, cher M'sieu Georges; nevertheless, a thousand thanks."

CHAPTER VI

IN A ROGUE'S CAFÉ

WHEN the door had closed on Félicie and she had hurried away through the dusk, Brand returned to the studio.

He lit his pipe and sat down in the arm-chair near the stove to think. On the wall nearly opposite where he sat was Marcelle's picture, and as the soft, pearly light, which came in at the window from off the snow, became less and greyer as the night drew on, the shadows began to creep out of the corners of the room.

The pale face of the woman seemed to stand out still more from the canvas, and the sad eyes to look at him in mute appeal. "Sad, haunting, unsatisfied eyes," as one of the great critics had described them.

As he watched the face a great rage sprang up in his heart against the man of whose return to Paris he had just heard. That

Jacques Belot should wish to take away the child, he did not suppose likely—yet. But it was against the possibilities of the future that he must seek to provide.

In eight months he had learned much ; and for the child who, Vivienne sometimes sorrowfully said, because she loved her, had “started life heavily handicapped,” he was prepared to battle as for his own.

In the dim future, into which the speculative in his nature tempted him occasionally to peer, there rose up a vision of a beautiful woman—in place of the child—and a threatening array of complicated circumstances which year by year would have to be faced. But he felt that he was prepared to face them.

To somehow or other see Belot was the first thing to be done ; or possibly he might discover where the child was and come to the house.

Brand, as he sat there thinking, thanked Providence that he was a successful instead of an indigent artist. It would certainly be only a question of amount, and then one must hope for the best, which in this case would be that the scoundrel should either

place himself within the clutches of the law, or get killed in one of the affrays of the Quartier or Belleville, in which, when in Paris, he was generally mixed up. But ruffians such as he have as many lives as a cat, Brand thought regretfully, and an exasperating tendency to outlive better men.

Jacques would not be very easy to find. He was more likely to be at the Château Rouge, or some other low haunt where the police came as seldom as possible, and where it would scarcely be safe for any save those of the fraternity to venture, than at the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle or even the fourth-rate one, named by students the "Poisson Mort," on account of the odour and incontestable staleness of its viands.

Nothing, he recognised, could be done to-night, but to-morrow, with Louys' aid, preliminary negotiations might perhaps be opened.

Brand did not go out as he usually did for dinner, as the snow was again falling, and of all places the cafés of the Quartier are the most miserable on such a night, with their delusive air of comfort, dispelled by constantly opening doors and stoves of

porcelain, which bake one if seated near them, but fail to throw any satisfactory degree of heat outside a radius of seven or eight feet. The Café de la Bonne Nouvelle was one of the best ; but on such a night it was scarcely likely to offer much in the way of real comfort. Draughts, the company of a score or so of models and *grisettes*, wet, and with at least some of the heart and gaiety knocked out of them by the weather, a stifling odour of wet boots and clothes of men and women, was too big a price to pay for even a well-cooked dinner, the latest gossip of the Quartier, and Gisella's wild dancing and extravagant posturing in the latest creations of her Montmartre *modiste*, provided the elastic-limbed *danseuse* put in an appearance on such an unpropitious night. Besides which, although the dark-eyed Gisella was pretty and fascinating, and a being who inspired many rough "lightning" sketches on the marble tops of the tables, he had seen her kick off the opal globe of the chandelier, which was conveniently placed at one end of the miniature stage at a height of about a foot above the dancer's head, too often for any element

of excitement over the feat to possess him. It was neither elegant—except in a *bizarre* kind of way—nor novel. But, nevertheless, her performance always ended with this meteoric upward flash of crimson hose in search of the glass globe for which her admirers would fight to pay. The agile limb being encircled far above the ankle by a jewelled band which, in mendacious moments of confidence, the wearer told every *nouveau* who would listen to her, had been a gift from “Le Prince de l’Ecosse.”

When Vivienne, at seven o’clock, brought in the little dinner she had managed to cook and get together from goodness only knew where, seeing that Brand’s need of it had been somewhat unexpected, he told her something of what had occurred. She was not so very much surprised; a strain of peasant’s fatality running through her woman’s nature.

“It’s always the crows that live, M’sieu Georges,” she said slowly, “the good fowls always die. But this Belot, he may want money, but not the child. She is no good to him, not big enough to sell yet; or else he might. But, M’sieu Georges, you are

not going to let him have her, surely. *Ma pauvre p'tite*, and she is so pretty. Oh, no, M'sieu, of course you're not. She would cry herself blind without her papa."

And the old woman looked at him with anxious eyes.

"No, no," replied Brand laughing, "of course not. We (you and I) could not do without her now, could we, Vivienne?"

"No, you are right, M'sieu, and if this Belot comes to the door in search of you?"

"Say that I am engaged if I am out, and ask him to call again. If I am in, come and tell me."

"Very good, M'sieu."

"And now go and see that Marcelle has not run away, or kicked the clothes off, or done one of the many things you are always telling me she does, but should not do."

When she had gone, Brand thought out the first moves in the campaign over his dinner and bottle of Bordeaux ; but, as it proved, his first moves were already anticipated.

Next morning, amongst his letters, was one with the envelope dirty and stained, as though addressed on the top of a dirty table in some café. The handwriting was good,

but both paper and ink were obviously that supplied for two sous for the convenience of customers. The former was whitey-grey, and the latter violet, well watered to overcome the thickness caused by evaporation.

The communication was addressed from Marcelle's old lodgings, and ran thus:—

“ RUE VICTOR COUSIN, 5, PARIS,

“ 18th December, 187—.

“ MONSIEUR,—You may be surprised to receive this from me, and to find that I have returned to Paris. Paris—who would keep away from it long? Alas that I find *ma femme* no more. Madame Donjon has told me how she died. Accept my most grateful thanks for the interment. My little daughter, I discover from Madame, is with you. A father's heart longs to see her, and I shall do myself the pleasure of calling upon you, Monsieur, in a day or so. *Ma pauvre Marcelle!* Oh, that I might have been near to have comforted you in your extremity, and have soothed your last hours.

“ Of course it is very good of you, Monsieur, to have done what you have for the

child. Doubtless she has been happy and well cared for ; but, after all, no one but I can be a father to her. I shall take her with joy that the good God has left at least something to remind me of my beloved wife.

"Should Monsieur wish to communicate his wishes to me before I call, a letter addressed to me as above will reach my hands.

"With my sincere esteem, I am Monsieur's devoted servant,

"JACQUES BELOT."

Brand read and re-read this letter several times, hoping that doing so would elucidate the future intentions of the writer. The veiled threat of claiming Marcelle was, doubtless, merely a hint as to what might be anticipated were negotiations not to result in the way Belot desired, and not an indication that he had any wish to assume control of her and accept the responsibility of her maintenance. The suggestion that he, Brand, might wish to communicate with the writer before he called, was merely another hint that the matter might be possibly arranged for a consideration. The sentimentality with reference to the dead was put in to make any

concession of the child seemingly the more valuable.

That Belot should be either willing or able lawfully to take away the child, of whose existence he had troubled himself so little, was of course unlikely ; but, as Louys had suggested, and Brand's own common sense confirmed, he was better (though possibly undesirable) as a friend than as an enemy.

Anyhow the matter had best be settled with as little delay as possible. He remembered a little café stowed away in a by-street off the Boulevard St. Germain, near the Quai de Montebello, where it might be possible to meet and discuss matters uninterruptedly. He rang the bell, and asked Vivienne to put on her bonnet and run round to the Rue Victor Cousin with a note for Monsieur Belot. He then sat down and wrote a few non-committing lines asking the recipient to meet him at the Café des Anges by three o'clock.

"Yes, he will be at M'sieu's service at the time named," was the message Vivienne brought back, adding that M'sieu Belot had sought to question her very narrowly as to

Marcelle, whether she was happy, whether M'sieu Brand was fond of her. "All of which," replied the old woman, "I told him he had better ask you himself M'sieu Georges."

Félicie turned up at about eleven o'clock.

"What, you?" exclaimed Brand. "I thought you had to pose for Delacluse this morning?"

"And so I intended," she replied with a little *moue* of affected disgust. "But the wretch said the *étudiants* had taken a holiday—more likely stayed in bed, I told him—and that there would therefore be no pose. So I have come on here, M'sieu Georges. But I can go away again if you don't want me, or are expecting some of your fine lady sitters, who would doubtless be shocked to meet a model who is wicked enough—*le bon Dieu* help her—to sit for the figure."

"Don't talk nonsense!" replied Brand. "They would only be too delighted to meet so distinguished a model."

"Now you joke, and I detest you," broke in Félicie, but without any sign of that feeling upon her fresh young face, which was flushed with the keen air of the street.

"Get your things off, and I will stoke up, so that the room is of the degree of heat your serene highness requires."

Félicie retired behind the screen near the stove to prepare to take the pose. It was one of those little womanly delicacies to which most models cling with a tenacity it takes a woman to understand, and which mystifies the man she has been sitting to, perhaps for months, exceedingly.

She was soon ready, for coquettishness and dalliance only occur in putting on things, and time is precious when light fails so rapidly in winter days.

Félicie sat still for a long time without speaking, and Brand painted rapidly. At last she said: "That Belot. I have heard he is vowing Marcelle's child will be as good as an annuity to him. But, M'sieu Georges, you won't give the child up to him. Ah, you do not, perhaps, realise what that means—not now, but later on. Be firm, M'sieu Georges, and the rascal will surely give way. Do not think I interfere in your affairs, but— Well, you must know. Not all, perhaps, because you are not a woman. But something. Why should I say any-

thing? What is it to me? you ask, perhaps. What, indeed? But no matter, I am fond of the child, she is so gay; I should not like that brute to have her."

"Don't worry yourself," said Brand gently, "he shall not have her. And," laughing at the thought, "if he thinks he is going to live in idleness out of what he can threaten out of me, well—we shall see. I know what you mean, poor little soul! But he cannot claim her legally, and I have no intention of giving her up."

"You must beware of him, M'sieu. He is not to be played with. He has earned a guillotining already; he is not likely to let trifles interfere with his plans."

Brand burst out laughing. Félicie was so serious, and had moved her pose in her excitement.

"Oh, a thousand pardons," she exclaimed contritely, swinging round her body till the light reflected from the mirror on the floor fell again on the right side of her face, and threw up the roundness of her throat and chin.

Brand paused to satisfy himself that she had assumed the exact pose as before, and

then went on painting the listlessly disposed arms. At the end of forty-five minutes' work he called a halt for rest, and Félicie stretched herself gratefully, her hands interlocked behind her shapely head and her whole graceful figure tense, then she came and stood beside him to see the progress he had made.

It was a pleasure to sit to a man who could paint as well as he, who neither made flesh like putty, parchment, nor marble: but gave it the opalescent tint of perfect health. She had seen too many pictures not to know that this one would score a success, and a feeling of pride at this wonderful rendering of her actual self, idealised so slightly that no pang of jealousy was excited, and satisfaction that she was so perfect in form possessed her. Only one pang of bitterness struck her. She did not care to think of the picture being sold, of its passing into the possession of someone who cared nothing for her, who had never spoken kindly to her, who had never done her a service. Someone who would have purchased the picture of another woman if equally well painted, to whom she *as she*

mattered nothing at all. She would have liked to feel that this *alter ego* would return after the Salon and be hung in the studio; would be with Brand always. Even a slight spirit of rebellion stirred in her when she realised that this was unlikely to be the case, for M'sieu Brand had painted too many models to be sentimental about them, at least so long as they lived and could come to him whenever he required them.

She thought out all this when she had resumed the pose, and whilst he was busily engaged in working up the high lights on the right side of the figure, and touching in the carelessly discarded Roman draperies and garments which lay on the marble bench of the alcove in which she was supposed to be sitting.

At a little after one o'clock Brand, whose mind had been busily engaged in thinking over the coming interview with Belot, knocked off work, and he, and Félicie, nothing loath, went together to Père Grandet's for *déjeuner*.

Louys was there, and after they had talked the affair of Belot over, the two men walked down the Rue des Écoles and Rue

des Carmes to the Place Maubert, where they parted, Louys to visit a friend who lived in one of the houses fronting the river on the Quai St. Michel, and Brand to his rendezvous at the Café des Anges, by way of the Rue Galande.

The snow lay still thick, though foul and dingy, in the by-streets near the Seine, and the Café des Anges hiding behind a shop front, which modern enterprise had thrust out half a metre on to the narrow pavement, looked dull and repulsive with its almost paintless woodwork, and weather-worn and grimy stonework, as Brand pushed open the door and entered.

A few rough-looking men glanced up sharply, and then went on with their games of cards or dominoes. In a far corner, well out of the light thrown by the two oil lamps swung from the ceiling, he discovered the man of whom he was in search. He crossed over and sat down on the opposite side of the table at which the man was sitting.

"You are M'sieu Brand, I presume," said the latter, after close scrutiny. Brand nodded, and his companion went on.

"Good, I am much obliged to you, M'sieu, for your prompt reply to my letter. Will M'sieu take an absinthe? No. Then, perhaps, he will accept a cigar, and permit me to indulge in an absinthe, so that we may talk over our affair more comfortably."

Brand accepted the offered cigar, which was too good to have come out of the shops of the Quartier which Belot was likely to patronise, and ordered the absinthe for his companion when the proprietor appeared to answer the sharp rap on the table.

Belot thanked him profusely, and when they were again alone, said, "*Bien*, M'sieu Brand. Now, let us come to business. I come back to Paris. What do I find? My poor *femme* no more,—my child——"

"Stop!" exclaimed Brand sharply, but in a low tone. "*Her* child! You know perfectly well, M'sieu, that you say 'my child' merely with a purpose. It is even possible that you would not have troubled about her had you found her the inmate of some institution of charity instead of under my care. Perhaps M'sieu is unaware of the documents I have in my possession in which her lamented mother gave the child

into my care, a disposition that M'sieu would find it difficult, I fancy, to upset."

The man across the table knew perfectly well that he had not a leg to stand on in advancing his claim to the child, but he meant to fight for something, nevertheless. It was a fixed principle with him to make something out of every man or woman with whom he came in contact; so far as possible and as his opportunities allowed.

"M'sieu is correct," he replied airily, "to a certain extent. Yes, doubtless correct. It is a fact that *la p'tite* is—well we will not say. What good is there in using hard names? It is a common occurrence, too, and no one need abuse the other. It was an accident, a regrettable accident that our union was neither blessed by the Church nor ratified by the State. Let it pass. I have nothing to say against M'sieu as a guardian. But, M'sieu, think of a father's heart. The Church or State is neither responsible for nor able to create that."

Brand smiled somewhat grimly. There was something comical and, at the same time, revolting in this assumption of fatherhood—for a purpose—and the expression

of assumed affection upon the good-looking though dissipated face.

"The father's heart," said Brand slowly and deliberately, "has been five, or is it six, years, M'sieu, in finding itself. And the passion, we will not call it love, for the woman who was the mother of the child lasted how long?"

The man addressed moved uneasily in his seat, and rapped perturbedly with his forefinger upon the table. He had scarcely expected his visitor to argue so much or so closely about to him so unimportant a matter.

"M'sieu does not comprehend the situation, I fear," he said, after a slight pause.

"Perfectly," rejoined Brand calmly.

"It was with the greatest regret that I left Paris and Marcelle," the other went on without noticing the interruption, "everyone not being so fortunate as M'sieu, and able to fix their comings and goings."

"Yet fortunate in escaping the consequences of their—misfortune, and that of others," interpolated the listener.

A flash of anger at the thrust flashed for a brief moment in the man's eyes. But he

continued without showing the shot had told upon him in any way. He had determined upon a last *coup*.

"M'sieu, let us be reasonable. We are both men, though you are a successful artist (to the success of M'sieu," and he sipped his *absinthe*), "and I a *chevalier d'industrie* if you will. What does it matter? ALL roads lead to Père Lachaise, the Morgue or the guillotine. You are fond of little Marcelle. She of you. I am fond of little Marcelle, you need not smile, M'sieu, but I cannot take proper care of her. I admit it. What can we arrange?"

His companion saying nothing he went on.

"Now it is all very well, I should not know what to do with her, but later on it will be different. A pretty girl such as she promises to be is worth something—a great deal—any day of the week in Paris——"

A look on Brand's face and in his eyes made the speaker draw back against the wall and put a foot more space than the mere table top between them.

"M'sieu is offended? Well, he has just said that I have no rights over the child. *Bien*, why then should I not seek to make

her serve my purpose? I am hard up. Things have not gone well with me lately. M'sieu is a rich man. I am not altogether the person, I can see by M'sieu's expression, to be welcomed at odd times when desiring to renew M'sieu's acquaintance or to see my—well, little Marcelle. And when she grows up, and a grand alliance is in contemplation it might be inconvenient. I might even have repented my ways, and feel it a duty to inform the fortunate fiancé who M'sieu's protégé really is. It might inflict pain upon all parties, and I am sure, M'sieu, you would wish to prevent pain and possible humiliation to Marcelle. Is it not so?"

Brand did not hasten to reply. He recognised that the rascal on the other side of the table was playing his last card. And, as he doubtless knew, his best one.

"I see," he remarked firmly, after a moment or two, during which he watched his *vis-à-vis*, fixedly. "You wish to strike a bargain. Well, you are doubtless wise. You may have taken the road to Père-Lachaise, or—to the other place, before Marcelle is of sufficient age to be of use to you. Or the

child herself may have died. You are a business man, and want to realise at once. Well, how much is it to be? Here is a paper, read it through, and if its sense is agreeable to you, tell me how much you require for signing it."

Belot took the paper and scanned it through rapidly. He saw at once that if he signed it, and ever put in an appearance again he would run great risk, if only Brand were firm. The police would be glad enough to lay him by the heels he knew well enough. He decided on a sum which should not err on the side of modesty.

"I am agreeable," he said with a laugh, tossing the paper across to Brand, "what does M'sieu say to 20,000 francs?"

"Absurd! That is a matter of opinion. Well, 15,000?"

"No! M'sieu's paternal heart values a pretty child at a very low figure for so rich a man."

"You over-estimate my wealth altogether," replied Brand; "such a sum is out of the question, whether I felt inclined to pay it or not. But to put an end to this business, and prevent fruitless discussion, I will tell

you exactly what I am disposed to pay you upon your delivering that document to me, signed, or signing it here in my presence. I will pay you to-morrow the sum of 5,000 francs. And then I never wish or expect to see you again. What do you say, M'sieu ? ”

Jacques Belot frowned, and thrusting his hands into his pockets and his legs straight out under the table, he leaned back against the wall and contemplated Brand curiously.

He must have decided from the latter's expression that the offer was final, and that further discussion was unlikely to obtain an advance in the offer. In a word, that it was 5,000 francs or nothing.

An injured look crept into his face, and he said, after five minutes' consideration, “ It is little enough, M'sieu. Devilish little. But I suppose ” (with a shrug of the shoulders, indicating disgust) “ that I must accept it.”

“ Just as you please,” said Brand, rising.

“ I accept ; M'sieu is an honourable if not a generous man. I will sign the paper now if M'sieu has as much as five louis to give me on account.”

"Very well. Perhaps M. le Propriétaire will oblige us with a pen and some ink."

When these had been brought, Jacques signed the paper and handed it to Brand with a bow, receiving in exchange five twenty-franc pieces, which he pocketed carelessly.

Brand said "Good-night," and moved to go. He, however, turned round sharply and caught a look in Belot's eyes which made him thankful that he had a revolver in his pocket. A look which translated well enough the rascal's longing to stick a knife into his back.

"Au revoir, M'sieu," said Belot, relaxing his face into a smile, "till to-morrow. You will not fail to be ready?"

"No," answered Brand, shortly, going out of the door.

When it had closed behind him, the man with the five louis in his pocket laughed. He had done very well. A hundred things might happen ere the child grew up. Such a thing as Monsieur's Brand's death. And if such an event happened at an opportune time, well, Marcelle might yet bring grist to his mill which ground all corn alike, dirty

or clean. Anyhow, to-morrow, for once in a way, he would be a rich man. Five thousand francs! He ordered a bottle of the best wine on the strength of it. The men who had been playing cards and dominoes had long ago gone out or had fallen asleep, and so he drank a glass with the Proprietor, who tried but did not succeed in obtaining a knowledge of his business.

Brand, as he hastened through the narrow and now pitch dark streets, which led into the Rue St. Jacques, was also congratulating himself. Not so much upon having made a good bargain, as upon making it well nigh impossible for the scoundrel, he had just left, to ever again cross Marcelle's path, or in the future interfere with her life or happiness. Two hundred pounds was not too much to pay for such a consummation.

Mid-day on the morrow Jacques Belot received 4,900 francs, and forthwith disappeared from Paris; or, at least, from the ken of Brand and his acquaintances.

PART II

CHAPTER I

THAT INTRUDER LOVE

"GOOD morning, papa," and a pair of slender girlish arms were thrown around Brand's neck as he sat in a wicker easy-chair placed beneath a plane tree in a beautiful, old-fashioned garden, gay with the bright flowers of early summer. The garden of a villa on the slopes near St. Cloud, overlooking the Seine.

"Good morning, *ma p'tite*. But fie, why are you so late again this morning?"

"Oh, papa, I am so terribly lazy, and this air makes one sleep so. And Vivienne, who says young girls such as I should sleep all they can, eat all they can, and grow all they can, seems to be in league with my bed, for she doesn't call me or I don't hear her. ('which is more likely,' interpolated Brand). And besides there are now no noises of the

street, and no M'sieu Carlton to whistle loudly and cheerfully as if work at the Beaux Arts for six or seven hours a day, with a lot of nasty students, was the pleasantest thing in the whole world ; and so I don't wake up, Papa."

"So it seems," was the reply, as, linking her arm through his own, the speaker crossed the wide lawn and entered the window of the bright room in which breakfast was laid.

Rather more than ten years had passed since the morning Jacques Belot received the money which was to close his mouth with reference to the child of the woman he had betrayed and deserted. He had doubtless been in Paris during that time, but he had never come either to see Brand or written to him. And thus, so far as the latter was aware, he might be dead.

Marcelle was now a school-girl of seventeen, bright, happy, pretty, elegant.

Worshipped by her "papa" and old Vivienne; adored by the susceptible Félicien Louys, openly, and by young Geoffrey Carlton in secret; liked by all.

At eight years of age Brand had been con-

fronted by the problem of her education. It was no longer possible or desirable that she should receive no more instruction than he could manage to give her. From the first it had been his determination that she should enjoy all the advantages which he could afford, and that she should in every respect be brought up as a lady, even though compelled to dwell in the Quartier.

Of schools there were not many to which she could be sent with advantage. The Communal Schools of the Quartier were not likely to provide her with desirable acquaintances, nor to give her the *cachet* of good breeding he so much desired.

At last, in his difficulty, he consulted Felicie. "Why not send her to the Ursulines?" said the latter after consideration.

"Ah, why not?" At all events Marcelle would learn nothing but good from the sisters, and the education afforded was known to be exceptionally thorough.

So at eight years of age Marcelle had been sent to the convent school in charge of old Vivienne. First as a day scholar, but latterly as a weekly boarder; with, it must be admitted, serious breaks in the continuity

of her residence in the summer time when Brand thought an excursion would please her, and in winter when he felt he needed her bright society at home.

It made little difference as to the result attained by her studies, however, for she was naturally clever ; and now at seventeen she was one of the head girls ; a favourite with the Sisters and her school-fellows alike. Now no longer a boarder, but only going a few mornings or afternoons a week for special studies. Her school life had been a very happy one ; for few of her companions thought the less of her for being a " Quartier child," and those who did seldom ventured to let the fact be known.

Brand was taking a holiday. At first he had thought of going to the coast, one of the Normandy *plages* at which it would have been possible to exist without being painfully fashionable, yet where Marcelle might have seen a little life. But several things had happened to prevent him going so far afield, and so he had taken a villa at St. Cloud, where, whilst quite out of the city, he would be within half an hour or so of his studio.

He had long ago left the one in the Rue des Quatre Forges for a much larger one in the Rue du Luxembourg, overlooking the Palace Terraces, and possessing quite a respectable garden of its own. He was now a rich man; his pictures sold almost as soon as they were painted, and for large sums. It was almost impossible for him to realize that at one time he had felt grateful to Père Godenot, of the hooked nose and Semitic keenness in business, for buying sketches at twenty francs apiece. In addition to his income from his profession, his father, who was his only near relative, had died and left him a capital sum which produced something between four and five hundred a year. People often wondered why he did not build a huge studio in one or other of the more fashionable quarters, as many of the artists less successful than he were doing. When any one suggested it to him, he only shook his head and smiled. He loved the Quartier too well. Where did one find such romance, where such good comradeship, such freedom from conventional ideals. The Quartier had known him poor, it should know him rich. If his sitters feared to penetrate into the

"wilds" of the Boulevard St. Michel, and hesitated to soil their scented skirts along the pavement of the Rue du Luxembourg,—well, that was their look out, not his. And if he had no portraits to paint he could give more time to the branch of Art he loved still better, and paint the classical and *plein air* figure studies which seldom failed to find purchasers almost before the paint had dried.

In the same house in which he had his studio and suite of apartments, a young student at the Beaux Arts had settled down. Brand soon took a fancy to him because he was that somewhat *rara avis*, a young artist with money who nevertheless worked. It was not unnatural that, as the acquaintance ripened, Geoffrey Carlton should be permitted to have his easel in the huge studio of the man who had become his friend and master.

Brand had watched very narrowly the friendship which sprang up between Geoffrey and Marcelle, a friendship which was almost sure to spring into existence where a pretty girl of sixteen or seventeen and a young man of twenty-two were thrown much together. Not, however, that Marcelle seemed

to consider the young Englishman—at whose French she laughed, urging him to converse in his own mother tongue, which she spoke almost as well as he did—in any light save that of a rather engaging comrade, with whom she could joke, and tease to her heart's content without unpleasant reprisals.

Had it been otherwise her “papa” began to realise that he would have been actually jealous.

Time had dealt gently with him during the last ten years, and though nearly forty he was still a young man. Marcelle sometimes playfully told him that he was getting grey, and sent a pang to his heart that he scarcely as yet fully understood; but grey hairs do not make age, although they sometimes adorn it.

On this morning of early summer radiance Marcelle was gay, and noticed her companion was unusually silent and absent-minded.

“Papa, you are very silent,” she exclaimed, speaking in English with the prettiest trace of accent imaginable; “is there something which disturbs you?”

"No, *ma p'tite*, unless it be that I fear I have not done all I should for you. It is strange, and not good perhaps, that you should have so few girl friends, and should live in the Quartier with a man almost old enough to be your father, and with an old woman who, though she adores you, cannot be a companion to you."

"What nonsense you talk," said the girl coming round the corner of the breakfast table, and leaning her head on his shoulder. "I want none except you and Vivienne, and M'sieu Carlton when I require to tease someone. And what nonsense, your age! You are quite young, papa. There is something about you young. Oh, I am very stupid, and I cannot explain, but you are not old to me. And then the Sisters at the Ursulines are very kind, and some of the girls I like, and they like me. And Marie is quite a companion, although only a maid. What more do I want?"

Brand smiled. But on this bright June morning he realised what the pang was that struck him sometimes when he watched Marcelle and Geoffrey together.

She was growing up; nay with the pre-

cocity of the life of the Quartier she had already grown into a woman. It was even possible that in a year or two at the most he would have to part with her. He who had lived for her during the last twelve years, would be left alone. It was not a pleasant thought, and so he drove it resolutely out of his mind whenever it sought to find lodgment there.

"Some day," he said, as Marcelle still nestled close to him, "things will be different *ma p'tite*. When you are a little older, other interests will come into your life. Just as it is right they should. And poor papa will have to be content with a less prominent place. We shall see——"

"Never that," interrupted the girl gently, but with strange firmness. "Never that, papa. It would be ungrateful, horrid, and ——" she laughed a little uncomfortably.

"Make no rash promises. Ah," as the big door bell rang with the music of real bell-metal, "that must be Monsieur Carlton. He has come to breakfast after all, or at least will be ready for a second. Ring and tell Marie to bring a cup and saucer."

The young fellow who entered on the heels

of the maid was tall, fair-haired and good-looking. The loosely-tied bow of limp silk, typical felt hat, which he had brought into the room with him, thinking his host would be in the garden, and careless attire generally bespoke the student who accepted the ways of the Quartier without questioning or revolt. He shed them, however, with less regret than might be supposed, when he flitted across the Channel to see his folks.

"M'sieu Carlton, you will have some breakfast?" questioned Marcelle when, after the usual greetings, the young fellow had seated himself.

"Mademoiselle is always kind. Thanks, I will. A water trip so early in the morning is provocative of a renewed appetite. And then, Mademoiselle, it is sufficient inducement for so charming a hostess to serve me."

He glanced at her with undisguised admiration. He had recently told his people, with a plan of campaign against this delightful citadel of beauty in his mind, that no one could expect to learn much, either in a studio or at the Beaux Arts, in less than four years. One had nearly gone; but in three more Marcelle would be twenty.

"Monsieur," replied his hostess, "how can anyone say that the English are not a *galant* nation? After such a speech! And you are always telling me when I correct your, of course, *nearly* perfect French that you are so thoroughly English. Papa there declares I speak ze Engleesh *parfaitement*. Comment cela M'sieu?" she laughed, mimicking the somewhat limited English of one of the governesses at the Ursulines.

It is easy work laughing at the jokes of a pretty girl, excluding the duty of common politeness; but Marcelle's accent was such as to cause both men to laugh heartily, for they knew the governess and the "superior English" for which she received her salary.

"Mademoiselle's English is of the best," replied Carlton, bowing.

"M'sieu's compliments are getting tiresome. Let us talk of an excursion for a change. A Pic-nic Anglais middle-class. 'Everything left to Providence,' as I have heard you declare, and the salad behind! Nothing to drink, and the nearest restaurant two miles and a half along a dusty road. How charming!"

A lengthy discussion followed as to where

they should go. By water, of course. They had the whole day before them, and who would choose the road, white and dusty, when the enticing and peaceful Seine lay at their feet; at dawn a silver, blue riband, part shrouded in grey mist, and now a highway of burnished silver leading to Colombes woods.

An hour later and the three were walking down the street to the station of the Bateaux Parisiens. They could see the boat, a little larger than a bean, passing the end of the Ile Séguin, and making for the Pont de Sévres.

Brand carried a cushion, Carlton the provisions in a small basket and a string net, and Marcelle with a smart parasol of red silk resting on her shoulder, every movement of her slight, graceful little body denoting the "joy of life," tripped gaily along, with—as she declared laughingly, all she could manage when wearing a new costume—her skirts in her hand.

It was from Suresnes that they were to start rowing down to Asnières, from whence they would find their way by carriage into the shady Bois de Colombes, unless the river

bank itself should afford an attractive spot at which to land and picnic.

It was too early as yet for the little steamer to be crowded with pleasure-seekers or tourists, although the latter would probably avail themselves more of the early boats from Paris, did they but know the beauty of the river ere the sun is high. There were so few people on board, indeed, that the little party, with its obvious intention of lunching in the open air, attracted some attention. Marcelle was too dainty in her pretty costume of flowered muslin to be overlooked, and the two Englishmen accompanying her aroused vagrant speculations as to their relationship in the minds of several fellow-voyagers.

What a picnic it was! One of those delightful impromptu affairs in which youth delights, and age fancies it obtains a renewal of the early sensations of happiness.

Marcelle enjoyed it thoroughly. She ministered to the wants of her two companions with an air of experience in such things, which amused Brand and fascinated Geoffrey. It was as difficult for the latter to realise that she was still almost a child, as

for the former to comprehend that she was almost, if not quite, a woman.

It was on the bank that they decided to land and lunch after all. The Bois de Colombes would not move, and it would be a nice place to go to another day.

The older man smoked, listened, and dozed whilst the younger one and Marcelle talked. They two found much to say. There were the people ever passing in boats to criticise; the man quizzing the rowing, and the girl the women's clothes. Then there were the barges, gay painted things which crept along in tow of fussy tugs with impossible and idealistic names on bow or stern. Dingy "Héloïse-Abelards," "Suzannes," "Marie Amélie," "Clair de Lunes" slowly passing, like gendarmes dragging a reluctant string of gaily dressed *grisettes* to prison, with here and there a shabby one who had fallen on evil times.

Sentiment Marcelle would not have. Geoffrey had trembled on the brink several times, but had been saved by the girl's cool adroitness. To her it seemed silly and meaningless. Compliments, oh yes, who did not like them, but not the strange sentiment

which awoke an uncomfortable, restless feeling within her, and disquieting emotions at her heart. For had she not her papa? He was all the world to her, and she to him; and was that not enough?

And all the time they were talking on the row back to Surèsnes, papa was thinking, thinking of the impossible and the future.

Geoffrey came very often to see them whilst they remained at the Villa Beau Site, on the slopes above St. Cloud. So often, indeed, that Marcelle felt constrained to ask him whether he were not neglecting his work at the Beaux Arts; and then, for nearly a week, she saw nothing of him till Sunday. He came then, and she was glad to find that he was not offended at her frankness. To reward him, she consented to spend the afternoon, with Marie in attendance, in the Bois de Boulogne across the river. They sat under the trees, beside the lake at the back of the Route des Tribunes, watching the exquisite tracery of the shadows of the willows, poplars, and beeches in the still water. Happy in the shade and freshness of the lovely July day. Marie had found a

"cousin" in one of the soldiers from the Caserne, and had retired to a distance which might be considered the extreme limit of the sphere of chaperonage.

Every hour that he spent in her company, Carlton felt more keenly the fascination of Marcelle's *badinage*, coquetry, and beauty. As to his own hopes and feelings he had no uncertainty; but in this respect she was a mystery. Perhaps too young as yet, he often thought, to comprehend where they were drifting.

In three years, with hard work, such as that of the last year and a half, he might hope to have earned some distinction. Brand himself, who had known what work, disappointment and ultimate success were, had often given the younger man cause to hope. "You can paint, my young friend," he had said frankly and heartily; "but work. You need to study because you can paint, not to enable you to do so. Study will never make an artist; but the neglect of it may spoil one. Use your eyes, use your brains, work; and if there is such a thing as justice and reward you will obtain both."

Sometimes Geoffrey ventured to talk of

his artistic aspirations to Marcelle, whose soul was wrapped up in the life of the Quartier. She did not paint more than just to amuse herself, not invertebrate plaques and impossible table cloths, but slight sketches, of merit because of their slightness and impressionism ; but she knew more than enough to enter into the feelings of both her papa and Carlton.

She had a divine voice, however. A "picture" voice as Montcalm, the strange-eyed poet of the Quartier had once called it after listening to her singing of one of Beranger's lyrics. It had been well-trained at the Ursulines, and when she sang in the studio of an evening—more especially on Sundays—there was little space and few seats to spare. Her voice was a pure contralto, which seemed to float in the very air itself, and kept her audience spell-bound to the end. Her master wanted her to study to go on the stage, to sing in opera when her voice became strong enough. But to all these schemes Brand turned a deaf ear, and she always laughed and said, "It is enough for me to be with papa. I have an audience, the most charming and apprecia-

tive whenever I sing, and what more can I want?"

Under the trees that Sunday afternoon, with Marie and her corporal, for she was a pretty girl, neatly dressed and dainty of boots and underskirts, and would look at no one lower, well out of earshot, Marcelle and her companion could chat freely. The gentle rustling of the top branches of the trees affording a soothing accompaniment to desultory conversation.

"It is nice to be as old as you," exclaimed Marcelle, suddenly addressing Carlton.

"Am I so very old! Why?"

"No, only two and twenty seems quite old to me at seventeen. Why I want to be old," she said, continuing solemnly, "is, I should be so much more use. I could take better care of papa (a slight flush stole into her cheeks), and do many things which it is improper for a *jeune demoiselle* to do if one may believe Sœur Agatha at the Ursulines. Oh, M'sieu Geoffrey, she is truly funny, is Sœur Agatha sometimes, and thinks it a terrible thing that I should have to live in the Quartier Latin, which I love, and for

me to know models and about them, and *le nu*, and Art, and the students. I believe she thinks all girls should be confined in convents, and taught to despise pretty toilettes and lace *jupons*. But, then, she is not a girl, and most of all, not a child of the Quartier as I am."

Geoffrey laughed. With him, too, Sœur Agatha and her views were likely to meet with little sympathy.

"When you are grown up, Mademoiselle," he said, with an affectation of raillery, "you may wish to be as you are now. And even if you do not wish for anyone else save M'sieu Brand to take care of, someone else might wish to take care of you. What then?"

"Papa would send that someone about his business. And, as for me, I am sure papa wants no one else. But, M'sieu Geoffrey, I like you very much," she said, noticing that his face clouded over; "you are always kind and so polite, as I have said before, that the imputation of impoliteness must surely be a libel on your countrymen."

Carlton looked somewhat sadly on the girl sitting on the grass at his side, and toy-

ing with the tip of her boot and parasol. No, she could not be as ignorant of life as to really suppose she could always go on living with papa. No one who had been brought up in the Quartier could. He had often wondered that she had been permitted to always live in such an atmosphere of Bohemianism, and now that he felt so keen an interest in her, he sometimes felt inclined to resent Brand's having allowed her to do so. It was all very well for students, models, and artists, but the Quartier Latin was scarcely a good nursery for a pretty girl, or a place of residence one would choose for one's sister.

As to the relationship existing between Brand and her, he was compelled to be content with what information he could pick up in a casual way. He had heard various versions of the current story from artists who had known or heard something of the affair at the time. But that was now so many years ago, and the memory of dwellers in the Quartier is not long. Romances of a sort, tragedies and comedies crowd so swiftly one upon another, that a year, a week even sometimes, will suffice to pass



such an episode into the archives of *la vie de Bohème*, or even absolute oblivion.

Who her mother had been he had learned, but her father's identity was shrouded in mystery, and he realised that his friendship with Brand, warm though it was, scarcely as yet justified his seeking from him any details of the parentage of the girl he loved.

"Ah," Carlton said, after thinking over Marcelle's assertion as to how papa would receive lovers, "you make M'sieu Brand a very terrible person, Mademoiselle. I have not found him so."

"No? But then you see," she replied with an openness that dashed any immediate hopes of his to the ground, "you have not attempted to take me away."

"But what if I did?"

"I shouldn't go, of course. But why talk of the impossible? M'sieu Geoffrey, you are positively unamusing this afternoon. And we must be going back, or papa will really think you or someone," she quickly added with intuition, "has really run away with me."

"Must we go?" exclaimed Carlton.

"And this the last Sunday of ours at St. Cloud."

"Yes, we must, or we shall be late for dinner ; and then all sorts of dreadful things are sure to happen. Come ! "

He got up reluctantly, and then taking hold of her white hands, which she stretched out to him, firmly round the wrists, he raised her to her feet, trembling slightly himself as he felt her pulses throbbing, and saw a blush steal into her face.

"You are very strong, M'sieu Geoffrey. It must be nice to be strong. And yet," she continued, smoothing the creases from her skirt, "it is nice sometimes to be weak."

He flushed with pleasure. Did she mean what he thought ?

"I could carry you a kilometre," he said, laughing, "you are so light."

"You had better not boast, M'sieu Geoffrey, or try. Where is Marie ? "

"Marie ! "

"Oui, Mamzelle. Je viens à l'instant, Mamzelle."

Marie appeared at the end of the narrow path, shaking her skirts and adjusting her hat, which latter had doubtless been laid

aside that she might recline on the grass the more comfortably.

She glanced quickly from Geoffrey to Marcelle, and Marcelle to Geoffrey. Her corporal had been curious to know whether her young mistress and the Englishman were *fancé*, and she had nodded her head mendaciously. Now she looked to see whether she could relieve her conscience of the burden of the untruth by the light of the events of the afternoon.

Experienced in affairs of the heart, she speedily decided that she could not. M'sieu Geoffrey looked as usual, Mamzelle Marcelle the same. It was still, she thought sympathetically, a matter of time.

CHAPTER II

WHO IS MARCELLE?

ON Wednesday Brand, Marcelle and the servants returned to Paris.

The heat of the Quartier was oppressive after the breezes on the slopes of St. Cloud, but the Rue du Luxembourg was comparatively cool owing to the fine open space of the Palace gardens stretching in front of it. Next day Marcelle returned to her studies at the Ursulines for the short remaining time before the summer vacation, and Brand to his work upon the big picture of "For Christ : The Christian Martyrs," for the purposes of which he had spent a month in Rome during the early spring. The huge canvas occupied half of one wall of the studio, and had necessitated the erection of a movable platform from which to paint. The far end of the room having been fitted

up with a distempered background representing a corner of the arena, and it was here that the models were posed. Ten figures three-quarter life size were shown, besides a dozen or so more of Romans leaning over the parapet of the arena gazing down at the victims about to be led into it to face death. It was a picture of strong contrasts, likely to evoke much criticism.

On only a few of the faces of the girls and women—there was only one man, an aged patriarchal figure—was the conventional calm. One or two, with ecstatic gaze, were kneeling in prayer; one or two were indifferent, dulled by their previous suffering and imprisonment. Others were terror-stricken. One commanding figure stood out alone, superior to fear and death. A woman on whose face was written by the painter's skill the look of peace and calm with which a strong nature, firm in conviction of right has throughout all time faced persecution and death.

The models had been difficult to get. The two Nubian girls crouching in a corner of the picture, mere children, scarcely under-

standing their position, were performers in a troupe of acrobats filling an engagement at the different café concerts and music halls of Montmartre. The woman whose agony of shame and fear made the spectator shudder was a well-known actress, who had volunteered to sit to Brand, of whom she was a personal friend. The other figures were either models of the schools or *grisettes* of the Quartier who had seemed to fit the artist's conception of the characters, and had not been unwilling to earn such a fee as he was accustomed to give. Félicie, now a woman of thirty-two, still elegant and with a singularly mobile and beautiful face, who had become one of the best known models in all Paris, as well as one of the most exclusive, appeared as the central figure. She was the wonder of artists; her marvellous figure being still unimpaired, and a dignity having replaced the fleeting expressions of the *diablerie* and gaiety of old.

She had quite a place in Brand's art by now; not merely a niche which might have been afforded to any pretty model with pleasant and painstaking ways. Her progress upward in her profession might be

traced in the pictures of the artist who had made her.

Since she had grown up, Marcelle came very seldom into the studio when Brand was working from undraped models, except when Félicie was sitting; with her it was different. Ever since she was a child Marcelle had been accustomed to talk with Félicie whilst she was posing. And the sketches, of which there were dozens in the studio, of "papa's beautiful model," as she often called her, had familiarised her so thoroughly with the model's figure and gestures that for her to be posing seemed perfectly natural. With the more or less promiscuous model it was a different matter. The element of vulgarity was sometimes inevitably present; and against this Marcelle's feeling of refinement, which Brand had fostered, and the pure, white, bare lives of the Ursuline sisters had encouraged, revolted. It was the difference between the models who held out their hands for the fee at the end of the sitting, and those who preferred to find their five or ten francs placed in their hand in an envelope at parting.

On Sundays, when friends were expected

to drop in casually to spend an hour chatting, talking of the latest successes of the various Academies and the Beaux Arts; retailing the often amusing, piquant, but seldom malicious, gossip of the Quartier, and to hear Marcelle sing, the picture was screened by a curtain of green serge dropped from a roller in the roof to the floor, and the properties of the Arena at the end of the room were cleared to give place to the piano and dais on which Marcelle and others who sang or recited took their stand.

These Sunday evening gatherings, in the huge studio which, like many others in Paris, opened into a veritable garden of delight of flowers and trees and picturesque red walls almost covered with ivy, and climbing plants, and creepers, were charming, informal, joyous, and Bohemian. The person who could claim the slightest acquaintance with Brand himself, or one of his friends, was welcomed with the whole-heartedness of the Quartier temperament, whether he was a critic with well-ironed silk hat, varnished boots and well-pressed suit on his way to a première or the début of some new star at one of the music halls or Cafés, or an in-

digent artist or student who, out of respect to his young hostess, had spent an hour inking the seams of his coat, fashioning a paper front to his flannel shirt, and filling up the cracks in his one wearable pair of shoes or boots with compositions preparatory to a coat of varnish, by which their shabbiness might pass unnoticed if, when sitting, he kept them well out of the light.

Those who were musical often wondered how it was that Marcelle could sing so well in an atmosphere thick with smoke from pipes filled with *petit caporal*, and that of strong cigars. An atmosphere that made her cough, and the eyes of the women present water more freely than even by their somewhat boisterous laughter at the jokes.

Marcelle was naturally enough not without several admirers, and Geoffrey on such occasions had to content himself with what little time she could spare him, and bear with as much equanimity as possible the marked attentions of others.

His one great source of consolation was the fact that she seemed to favour no one in particular. And least of all the young Frenchman, Gervais Desmoulins, whose im-

petuous admiration and rhapsodies concerning her were the joke of all the students at the Beaux Arts.

It was at one of these gatherings, in the autumn, that Carlton first heard a whisper of actual scandal concerning Marcelle's origin. The big canvas "For Christ" was no longer hidden by the hanging curtain. It was finished and, roughly framed to enable Brand to study the effect, hung on the wall. Only a few men were present, and all of them were artists. Neither models nor students—except Carlton—had been invited, and all those who had not been understood that it was a "private" gathering to which casual visitors would not be welcomed. Lest any should come who had not received the intimation Marcelle was receiving, chaperoned by Félicie, in the large reception room, which had at one time belonged to one of the courtiers of Louis XV. Carlton would willingly have been in attendance on her, but she had sent him away to see the picture, saying that she wished to have a chat with Félicie.

Brand might not have courted the verdict of so many of his fellow-craftsmen had he not been personally popular amongst them.

But he himself knew that the picture was a success, a brilliant triumph of ideas and art.

Amongst the *invités* was Philippe Morneau who, a contemporary with him at the schools, had eventually settled in Florence, and was now in Paris on one of his rare and brief visits.

Morneau was discussing Félicie, the principal figure in the picture, who was depicted calm, unabashed, undisturbed by the scowling faces of the patrician women who were gazing down at her, envious of her glorious beauty. A child—for she was little more—who sought to shut out those cruel faces by hiding her own with the hem of the scanty girdle of tiger skin Félicie wore, forming a touch of poignant pathos.

“Ah,” he exclaimed, “a woman like her, who seems never to grow old, and whose form is unimpaired at thirty, is a fortune to an artist. *Mon ami*, you are to be congratulated not alone on your picture—excellent though it be—but upon its *motif*, and the possession of such a model as Félicie.”

“One is aroused to grief by such a sight,” he said, turning from the canvas, and addressing Brand directly. “What might not

Marcelle Bonheur have become but for that vile scoundrel, Belot? Ah, what indeed! Cannot you remember her when she first sat at the Beaux Arts? Ah cannot I! But what is she? Where is she now? Félicie is here," pointing to her. "But Marcelle, *pauvre Marcelle!*"

Carlton, who stood almost at the speaker's elbow, shivered slightly. What was this mystery about Marcelle's mother, on the edge of which he seemed to be standing?

Women were held so cheaply in the Quartier, he had come to learn, that Morneau's unmeasured condemnation of this Belot must hide something very terrible. What if he discovered his Marcelle was—well, he would not name it even to himself. To him, oh, no, of course it could make no difference. But to his people, his mother? What would they say? His career, his Art at which he worked so lovingly, untiringly. The more so lately because of Marcelle and hopes which might be doomed to destruction, whilst his love lived on. He could never do anything save love Marcelle even if—— But the idea seemed preposterous. Surely Brand would never have allowed him to be deceived

in this way. If he had, he thought, well, he should have something to say to him. And then he suddenly remembered that he had never asked any confidence on the subject of Marcelle's history; but had freely accepted her as charming and pretty, and, in fact, had no one but himself to thank if his estimate of her proved a false one. He would ask Brand all about her some day, soon; and till then he would thrust all those terrible suspicions to which Monsieur Moreneau's remarks had given sudden birth into the background.

He was as anxious now to discover nothing as a few moments ago he had been to find out all that this reference to Belot implied. He was positively relieved when he heard Brand's voice, calm, and as though no mystery of any kind enshrouded Marcelle's story, replying to his friend's verdict.

"I'm glad you like it, Philippe! Ah, yes, indeed, Félicie is magnificent, superb. A central idea for a painter which is in itself an inspiration. But I feared you would think the picture too bold, too brutal in some respects. You who have taken the pretty peasant of Italy, and the simple poetry of

peasant life under your wing. But you will not find Félicie altered. She is with Marcelle in the *salon*, you must see her before you depart, especially as you leave Paris tomorrow. But have a turn and a cigar in the garden first. M'sieu Carlton will show you the way." He turned to Geoffrey as he spoke, and introduced him.

"Morneau, this is M'sieu Geoffrey Carlton, a student," adding with a smile as the men bowed, "an industrious one."

"M'sieu Geoffrey, this is M'sieu Philippe Morneau, the celebrated painter of Italian life."

Carlton took up a box of cigars from off a side table and handed it to Morneau with a smile, and then the two men went out through the wide open window into the garden.

"You have been in Paris, how long?" asked the artist.

"Since two years," replied Carlton.

"M'sieu Brand has been telling me that you are sure of the bronze next *Salon*. And that unlike many of your countrymen who come to our beautiful city and beloved *Quartier*, you work hard and play little."

"M'sieu Brand is too kind. The Quartier is fascinating——"

"And the demoiselles thereof," laughed the older man, interrupting.

"Assuredly," agreed Carlton, smiling, "but neither models, nor *grisettes* will help one towards industry. And they have been known to turn a paragon of hard work into a sluggard in Art."

"They are doubtless what they always were. But tell me of Mademoiselle Marcelle. She is very pretty, I believe. I have not seen her since she was fourteen. She has always been at school, or out when I have called to see my old friend and comrade."

Carlton had hoped for some such opportunity. He might now, perhaps, elucidate the remarks his companion had made in the studio.

"She is more than pretty, she is beautiful," he replied.

His companion glanced swiftly at his face, and he flushed slightly under the close scrutiny.

"And, as doubtless M'sieu has heard, is possessed of a most exceptional voice."

The speaker paused; he felt that his

opportunity had come, and he continued after a moment or two, during which his companion was blowing clouds of smoke into the air and meditating as to how much of the girl's history the young fellow at his side, so obviously in love, knew.

"M'sieu, perhaps, knew Mademoiselle's father?"

"Yes; he, too, was very handsome."

Philippe Morneau had traveled much, had mixed with English people, had begun to comprehend their little prejudices which extended to the Quartier Latin, to know that it would not be usual to receive even a pretty girl as a daughter into an English family who—well, was in the position of Marcelle. And he had also heard that the young fellow who was inclined to question him had English relatives from whom he had what were known as "expectations." He felt, however, that it was not his place to turn himself into a social *police des mœurs*. Doubtless Brand would explain all in good time.

Seeing that Carlton expected him to continue he went on calmly between puffs of his cigar, but smiling to himself the while, "He was a clever man. Dead, I believe,

years ago. Something happened to him, what, I don't quite recollect. Mademoiselle is a lady, well-educated, of course."

Carlton looked partly relieved, for he had not succeeded in keeping all traces of emotion from appearing on his face.

"There was——"

He had almost nerved himself to take the plunge, and ask the crucial question which had worried him terribly the last half-hour, and, indeed, now he came to think of it, had always seemed to lurk in the background of his intercourse with Marcelle.

Morneau understood what he meant and saved him the trouble.

"You do not know Mademoiselle's history. It was a sad but not uncommon one. There was nothing very unusual about her parentage."

The speaker watched the look of relief that his truly ambiguous words had caused to come into his listener's face with some amusement and satisfaction.

"I had thought, perhaps," said Carlton, in a minute. "But what matter. Monsieur, I am, indeed, obliged to you for the information."

"M'sieu is quite welcome," replied the other, smiling at his successful diplomacy on behalf of his friend Brand and his ward, adding suddenly as they turned to retrace their steps. "But surely my friend M'sieu Brand has not engaged a prima donna to entertain a few callers who have come in to see and pull his picture to pieces," he remarked, as the sound of someone singing came floating across the garden from the windows of the salon.

"No, certainly not. It is Mademoiselle," explained Carlton.

"Mademoiselle! Rather say an angel. Let us go in. Such singing! I am devoted to the music of the human voice, it is indeed something not to be missed."

The foregoing conversation did much to relieve Carlton's mind of the vague, but disquieting suspicions which Philippe Morneau's remarks in the studio had aroused. And Marcelle's reception of him, so frank and engaging, when he entered the salon with Monsieur Morneau re-awakened in him hopes for the future which his doubts had assailed.

"Will you not sing again," asked Philippe

Morneau, after he had chatted with Marcelle for a few moments. "I have heard so much about your charming voice, and so little of it that I am tempted to insist upon your continuing."

Marcelle smiled her appreciation, and returned without reluctance to the piano.

Most of the men had come in from the studio, drawn thither and away from endless discussions on chiaroscuro, modelling, and flesh tints, by the exquisitely fresh young voice. They stood mostly near the door, fearing to enter the salon lest the sound of their footsteps on the polished parquet floor should disturb the singer.

When she had finished, and the last vibrations had died gradually out of the air, Brand said, "'Le Chant D'Amour' ; give us that, Marcelle."

"Yes," urged Carlton, who was at the side of the piano, leaning over towards her tenderly. "That is perfect as is the voice."

Marcelle threw him one glance of mingled challenge and amusement ; and then struck the opening chords.

The words sank burning into his heart, the tones of her voice throbbed in his veins ;

the others listened spellbound ; Félicie, sitting on a sofa near Morneau, bent her head to hide the pain evoked by the knowledge that such a dream could never be for her.

"Give us one song more, Mademoiselle," said someone, when Marcelle had finished, and softly closed the piano.

"M'sieu, I am sorry, but no. I can never sing anything after 'Le Chant.'"

"Certainly not," exclaimed René Montcalm decisively. "It would be a desecration."

Someone laughed at his earnestness ; for the poet had friends who refused to take him and his passion for lyrics seriously. And then, the tension once relieved, the conversation broke suddenly forth with added vehemence because of the silence of the last ten minutes.

Morneau was chatting with Félicie on the sofa. She was dressed in a costume of pale lavender, soft, flowing, exquisite of shade, which set off her golden hair, and pure, bright skin and magnificent figure to perfection.

"Ah, Félicie, *ma belle*, you are ever the same," exclaimed the artist admiringly.

"Other women fade, they fall to pieces, their skins go" (the listener laughed, so many others had told her this in much the same terms) "they may be very virtuous, but are no longer any good as models. How is it accomplished?"

"You ask too much, M'sieu," she laughed; "if I knew, do you think I should confide it to any one? Least of all to a flatterer like you, M'sieu Philippe, who would forthwith seek to earn the gratitude of other women by confiding it to them. But to change the subject. What of Marcelle?"

"She is very pretty. Later on she may even be beautiful. Does she know anything concerning her mother and Belot?"

"No," replied Félicie, "why should she? That is all in the past."

"You may be right," rejoined her companion, "but what of the young Englishman? He is very much in love; and has, in fact, been questioning me concerning that rascal Belot. It was no affair of mine. I presume that Georges will inform him at the proper time. For the English, *ma belle*, have peculiar ideas on some subjects, and visit without much remorse the mother's

sins upon the children. More especially if they are of Marcelle's sex."

Félicie looked across at Marcelle and Geoffrey, who stood together talking in low tones and with happy faces. Then, as her companion's eyes travelled in the same direction, and she saw him smile meaningly, she said quietly:

"It is as you say, *mon ami*, concerning M'sieu Geoffrey; but, nevertheless, Marcelle will never marry him."

"Why not? He is very clever; rich they say, or will be. It is a very suitable alliance."

"Possibly, *mon ami*, however, we shall see. No more, for here comes M'sieu Georges, and he does not seem yet to realise the fact that Marcelle is a woman, and that suitors will therefore be likely to present themselves."

CHAPTER III

IN CARLTON'S STUDIO

A LITTLE before Christmas a small suite became vacant in the house next door to Brand's, and Carlton felt that he was bound to avail himself of it. Up to the present time the opportunity of acquiring a suitable studio within his means had not occurred, and he had thankfully availed himself of Brand's offer for him to work occasionally in his when he, Carlton, was not at the Beaux Arts or at the Académie in the Rue du Dragon. He felt, however, that the time had now come when to possess a studio of his own would be a distinct and great advantage. A place where he could work uninterruptedly at the picture upon which he intended at once to start, with a view to sending it to the Salon. Brand was also of this view; and for two reasons. He knew himself the value of the greater freedom a

studio, however small, conferred, and the value of quiet. In addition, this young fellow so obviously in love with Marcelle had gradually become a kind of menace to his own peace of mind. He had recently become aware that he was travelling with disquieting rapidity towards a situation which would entail a decision of momentous import being taken.

The studio which Carlton acquired was not a large one; but it was convenient. It had been built out like an excrescence, on the roof of an outhouse. The little salon opened directly into it, and the bedroom was only a few feet away down the passage which led to the suite.

The light was good, and that was a great point. The curtains left by the former tenant did not, however, please him, and so he consulted Marcelle with great solemnity as to what should replace them. A visit with her, Marie in attendance, to the Magasin Petit St. Thomas resulted in the purchase of countless yards of muslin which Vivienne and Marie for a consideration were quite willing to fashion into sky blinds. A pair of Moorish hangings being chosen to

form a portière over the studio door. Rugs, a few chairs, and a patent stove burning petroleum, in which Vivienne, when she saw it, placed no manner of faith as a heating agent, completed the additions he made to his little furnished suite.

When he was quite settled Brand, Marcelle, Félicie and Louys came to "five o'clock"; and the "salon of M'sieu Geoffrey Carlton" was, as Félicie laughingly declared, "inaugurated."

Louys adding with a sly look, "And nothing now remains for our young friend but to work."

Félicie whispered something to Marcelle who sat next her doing the honours of the tea table, and the latter blushed. A pained look came into her clear grey eyes; a look that made Félicie sad for Geoffrey, of whom she was fond in her good-natured way.

"This is a reception," exclaimed Louys, "to-night there will doubtless be an orgie. What studio has ever been inaugurated without one?"

"M'sieu Louys, I am astonished at you," replied the proprietor in a well-assumed tone of displeasure. "Remember the ladies!"

The ladies laughed. Félicie because she knew what studio inaugurations were. Marcelle because the ways of the Quartier seemed perfectly natural to her.

Carlton was in reality vexed at Félicien Louys' suggestion, although he passed it off lightly. Marcelle, he knew, was too much of a child of the Quartier to judge students' habits and vagaries with great severity. But nevertheless he had come to understand that, strange though it might seem, she was personally singularly refined in temperament, and he would have been hurt to think she thought him likely to indulge voluntarily in vulgar pleasures.

He was not an ascetic. What art student of the Quartier or anywhere else is? To have been one would have earned him little respect, and not a little discomfort. But, being a normally constituted and healthy young Englishman, he had found no pleasure in the vulgar loves of the Quartier. The Bacchanalian revels of the famous Bal Bullier, which reared a garish façade in the Carrefour de l'Observatoire, had interested him at first; and he had been there several times with fellow students of the Beaux

Arts. But the garden with its pseudo-Moorish arches and pavilion outlined with coloured lights, and the wildly *banale* dancing of the *étudiantes* and professional *chahuteuses* soon palled upon him—when the novelty wore off.

He never went now except to avoid being unsociable in the eyes of a friend; and, since he had learned to love Marcelle, when he did go he found himself almost overwhelmed with disgust at rubbing shoulders with this crowd of women and girls ready one and all to sell their kisses for a bock. It still seemed preposterous to him that they should have to hold themselves and their favours so cheap, and yet two years of the Quartier had taught him much.

Louys had laughed merrily, and Brand had smiled at Carlton's disclaimer of the nature of the gathering that doubtless would take place between the hours of ten and two in the morning, because to properly inaugurate a new studio with tea seemed to them impossible.

"My young friend," Louys replied with an air of mock seriousness, "if you do not ask your friends of the Beaux Arts to help

you celebrate your new departure, they will tie you up to the ladder, that is if the spirit of such *plaisanterie* is still what it used to be. Eh, Georges?" turning to Brand.

The two older men commenced to recount some of their own experiences; but if Félicie listened the other two did not.

"You have decided upon your picture?" Marcelle asked, looking at Carlton across the tea cups with a smile.

"It is what I told you the other day. You must not think me remiss, Mademoiselle, if I am compelled to absent myself from your delightful salon sometimes of an evening. I must work on my picture almost all day when not at the Beaux Arts, and that will mean taking my anatomy at the Rue du Dragon often of an evening."

"Of course. I know, M'sieu Geoffrey, that to become the great artist, which papa says you some day will be, you must work."

"That is quite true, Mademoiselle. Rest assured, however, that I shall come to hear you sing as often as possible."

Carlton felt chilled that she had expressed no regret that he should be obliged to give up so regularly coming in for a chat and to

smoke his pipe of an evening. To console himself he tried to imagine the time when to go out to enjoy Marcelle's society would be no longer necessary, but his meditation was cut short by Félicie, who rose abruptly and said she must be going.

He saw her to the door, where she turned and said with more meaning than he understood, "You have a delightful apartment M'sieu Geoffrey, but take the advice of a woman, make Art your mistress. Love is less kind."

When he returned the two men were already ready to leave, and Marcelle was adjusting her hat before a pretty hanging mirror in a white and gold porcelain frame which his sister had sent him as her contribution to the new *ménage*.

He went over to her.

Something seemed to tell her that he had thought her cold. She glanced round coquettishly; and then, when she had tied her veil, she said, holding out her hand, "You must not think that if you cannot come in so often we shall not miss you, papa and I. He enjoys your society, you talk of the schools and the Beaux Arts, and it

allows him to think how much less hard-working the students of to-day are than when he and M'sieu Louys used to be there. And I also like you to come," she added slowly. "If I have seemed unkind, forgive me. Good-bye! It has been a pleasant 'five o'clock.'"

When the door had closed on his visitors Carlton sat down to think. Marcelle's parting words had somewhat appeased him, but not quite; for the remembrance of Félicie's advice still disturbed his peace of mind. She might have said either more or less, he thought, and as he sat there with the *odeur féminine* of Violettes de Parme still in the air he felt almost resentful. Anyhow he had now a settled plan. There was nothing original in this or the plan; most young men similarly situated, he was forced to admit, had decided upon a very similar course of action. He was in love with Marcelle, as they were in love with Kate, or Suzanne, or Theodora, he (as they) would first become successful, and then declare his passion. To do so could not reduce his chance of acceptance, whilst it might possibly increase it. He would work on his picture

untiringly ; with four clear months in front of him he might accomplish much. The bronze medal was unlikely to fall to his lot ; but a good position following on a white ticket might mean a " mention " if he were lucky ; and then he would feel at liberty to speak.

He sat on, building castles in the air, until the middle-aged *femme de charge* who " did " for him at thirty francs a month came in to see if she could clear away the tea things.

" Monsieur will be at home to-night ? " she said, asserting the question in the monotonous voice of her class.

" Yes, Madame. I am expecting friends at nine, and perhaps you will be so good as to bring up some sandwiches and the other things you ordered this morning, if they have come."

" They have arrived just at this moment. Monsieur will have them in the studio ? "

She stayed chatting garrulously with him for ten minutes about the former occupant of the apartment, whose rackety existence and non-success in the schools came in for the severest condemnation from her.

"He went to the devil?" she said, when on the point of taking up the tray to leave the room, "who must have been expecting him since a long time, M'sieu. I am an old woman," she continued, repeating the last three words as her listener politely shook his head, "but take my advice, M'sieu, have nothing to do with the other students or *grisettes*. They are a bad lot. They come, oh yes, they come fast enough; and make merry with you so long as the money lasts. And then, pouf! They are gone with the money. It was in this very room—no, it was after all on the next floor—that a young artist, much about your own age, M'sieu, shot himself because of a *grisette*. Ah, indeed, it was sad. And she? Ah! she was dancing the can-can at the Closerie des Lilas the same night."

She paused to see the effect of her tragic recital. Possibly she was dissatisfied, for she continued, whilst walking towards the door:

"Beware of them. Money, after all, is not the dearest thing women cost, M'sieu Carlton, as every mother knows."

He laughed as the woman who so distrusted her sex went from the room. It appeared comical to him that he of all persons, he who had as yet never had an "affaire," should have received two exhortations upon the dangers of the tender passion in one short hour. It might be true that with a *ménage* of his own he would receive suggestions from his various *étudiante* acquaintances that they should become part of it. But the siren voices were like to fall on deaf ears so long as Marcelle, dainty, *spirituelle* Marcelle remained enshrined in his heart. He felt he could take his chance without the motherly protection of Hortense, the *femme de charge*.

He had scarcely time to light up the studio, draw the curtains so as to shut out the dark wintriness of the garden below, and place some "Bird's Eye," cigars, and, greatest luxury of all, some English-made matches on the table before the first of his guests came bursting into the salon.

"Whew!" exclaimed Morton Kinkhead, a student at Benjamin Constant's *atelier*; "say, Carlton, *m'n ami*, but you've begun right, anyhow.

' An odour, grateful odour 'tis I smell,
An odour not of sulphur nor of—*enfer*
'Tis of violettes de Parme,
And the ever potent charm
Of the painted ladies and their golden hair.'

Say! How's that, *m'n ami*, for an impromptu?"

"It is as good," replied Carlton, coming out of the studio, "as your doggerel is ever likely to be."

"Any ladies coming?"

"No."

"Then we can raise Cain," was the laconic suggestion.

"And my rent. Come and have a pipe of 'Bird's Eye' before the other fellows turn up. I want to hear about old Constant's new system of knocking the modelling of the torso into your addle heads."

"You're going to work?" said the American meditatively, when he had enjoyed the first few draws of the fragrant tobacco in silence. "Girl or chuck?"

"The first now, the last probably follows," replied Carlton somewhat dubiously.

"Cause and effect. Neglect the girls and they chuck you, put in time and they do ditto, for if you laze you haven't the cash

to lay out on them. Ah, this world isn't run on the joint stock principle in the Quartier."

Another pause in which to appreciate the tobacco, which was not *p'tit caporal*. And then the speaker queried :

" Marcelle Brand, Bonheur, whatever Mamzelle's name is ? I thought so. Pretty girl, darned pretty, sings like an angel, they say. Brand, a nice chap Brand, is making a pile of money. My boy, if you've any chance let me congratulate you."

" Reserve your felicitations, *mon ami*. Matters have yet scarcely progressed sufficiently far to justify them."

Morton grunted, stretched out his shabby boots into the full light of the gas and sighed.

" Why is it," he said at length, " that French shoes always appear to be made of the same material as that on which I do my charcoal sketches, and on the principle that a long connection between the uppers and soles is not to be anticipated ? "

" Because," his companion rejoined solemnly, " the wearer promenades the *trottoir* with other spirits more rowdy than him-

self, and passes half the night, most Thursdays and Sundays, at the Closerie des Lilas, fancying he is waltzing with elastic-limbed partners who end by kicking off his hat, and thereby disclosing an inordinate amount of *dessous* of an immaculateness inversely to their virtue."

The shot told, and Morton Kinkhead flushed slightly with the remembrance of his mother and sisters over in Boston, who belonged to the "National Society for the Suppression of Objectionable Advertisements," called for shortness the N.S.S.O.A.

"But that does not excuse the wily shoemaker for substituting millboard for honest shoe-leather."

"A noble sentiment," laughed Carlton, "considering you're from the land of the wooden nutmeg."

"But I don't make nutmegs," retorted the other, "and any way I'm sending right home for a pair of real shoes. So look out for my feet, my son, when you see me on Broadway—the Boule Miche—the first Sabbath after they arrive."

Further discussion was prevented by the entrance of a string of guests who came

across the salon arm in arm shouting the last air of the Concert Bataclan, and dragging with them a *nouveau* from the Beaux Arts (who had not been invited) protesting loudly. They shouted for Carlton, and pipes and whiskey, and then, with the aid of these, and a superfluity of animal spirits they settled in and proceeded to "raise Cain."

CHAPTER IV

THE STIRRING OF LOVE

TILL the beginning of February Carlton worked unceasingly upon his picture and at his anatomy in the Académie of the Rue du Dragon. He saw less of Marcelle than at any other period since his first acquaintance with Brand ; but he still saw sufficient of her to bind him with yet stronger chains of allegiance. She came in occasionally with Brand to see how his work was progressing, spoke to him encouragingly of what he had accomplished ; but always left him quite as much as ever in the dark as to her real feelings regarding him.

Marcelle herself never considered them. He was to her just a pleasant companion which her unconventional bringing-up permitted her to accept as such whenever the opportunity served. Love doubtless slum-

bered somewhere in her nature ; but as yet had never stirred itself to life in her heart. Love! of the baser sort there was so much around her. Intrigues, temporary *liaisons* with permanent ill-effects. Girls and women appraised and appraising themselves as one would a beautiful dress ; not for their virtue or intelligence. Against all which things Sœur Agatha warned her with a well-intentioned reiteration which became wearisome. But love, of which even in the Quartier some instances occurred, sacrificing, tender, true, unfaltering, which turns failure sometimes into triumph, which could warm the coldest studio, and turn the barest into a palace, she yet had to learn.

Sometimes there was a strange stirring in her heart, little more, like the winding sap in the trees at the near approach of Spring. A subtle commencement of a change which she did not understand, and which she could confide to no one. A gradual transformation which sometimes brought the blood into her cheeks when papa spoke suddenly to her ; which made her often hesitate to bestow the caresses she had been wont to do. And which caused

her a stab of pain when any one referred to him as being no longer young. But papa was always good, and tender and kind, and never seemed to notice all this, which, had he done so, she recognized would have caused her to rush away to her room to hide her burning cheeks and, perhaps, tears.

Once or twice old Vivienne, for she was old in reality now, with white hair and a face wrinkled like a Normandy pippin after six weeks in the straw of the apple loft, had spoken to her, with the frankness of her class, of M'sieu Geoffrey. But Marcelle had only laughed, and that so frankly the old woman shook her head sadly and prophesied a broken heart and possibly suicide for the promising young artist.

On one occasion when Brand had dropped in to see Geoffrey alone, and had found him in the studio, touching in the high lights on the water pools of his painting, the young fellow had inadvertently dropped a hint of his intentions.

He had been dissatisfied with the immediate foreground of the picture all along. The sedges were too elaborately touched in, and he had "touched them out" with an

amount of vigour that obliterated them entirely, and now he was stuck.

"Juste ciel!" exclaimed Brand as he saw what Carlton had done.

"Qualifying for a green ticket," rejoined the latter, gloomily.

"Don't be a fool, *mon ami*. You have had an attack of the most dangerous of artistic maladies—always excluding swelled head, of course, that is all. Pull yourself together. Scrape off some of that paint. Why, you must have applied half a tube of yellow ochre and cobalt to the square inch! scrape it off, man, with a knife, and go to work on it again. Leave the water alone, or you'll turn that effective steel gray of the pool into milk, and spoil the whole tone value."

Carlton felt rebellious.

It is not nice to be caught at the monkey trick of paint slinging, and least of all by an older man with whom one would stand well as to the virtues of self-control with a view to controlling something even more valuable in the near future. But he set to work as he was enjoined.

When he had finished Brand stepped back

a pace or two from where he had been sitting, and cast a critical eye over the picture.

"I should do this," he said at length, taking up an empty brush and indicating what he advised with the tip. "There is breadth, *mon ami*, the thing only wants pulling together a bit. There is atmosphere and distance, and I should keep this foreground low-toned so that the eye will travel into the picture.

"Thanks," said Carlton, with unaffected gratitude, "I will. I want the thing to turn out all right, and not get the chuck with a green."

"Oh, you'll get a white ticket safe enough," replied the older man encouragingly. "I've——"

"Seen many as bad things hung," Carlton filled in with a laugh.

"No, not quite that. Many worse. But joking aside, it is good, damned good. And the more I look at it the more I like it."

"Thanks! I only hope your good opinion may coincide with that of the judges; I believe Constant is to be one, and I'm rather in a funk about him."

"Nonsense!"

"And," continued Carlton, "it means a good lot to me. My people are not over enthusiastic about my prospects in Art, they like pictures of the 'supplement in sixteen colour' type best, and don't think that as I've prospects,' as they're called, I should waste more time than possible over here in learning to paint pictures I may never have need to sell. But M'sieu Georges," he went on hastily, "I should like to do something worth doing ere I get my recall, and the more so as I think Mademoiselle Marcelle shares your flattering faith in me that I might do it with perseverance."

"We should, of course, both like you to succeed," was the reply, uttered somewhat slowly. The speaker felt what a gap there really was between this young fellow of three and twenty, with something in his eyes which could not be mistaken as he pronounced Marcelle's name, and himself. Successful, good-looking, well-liked; yes, he was all this. But he was also verging on forty, with greyish hair and no longer exuberant spirits.

The subject was changed, because Carlton feared he had said too much, and because

Brand feared for him to say more; and in ten minutes the latter went, leaving Carlton to renew his struggle with the sedges on the foreground of his canvas.

A flock of the Luxembourg pigeons flew up out of the road as Brand stepped on to the pavement and walked away towards the entrance gate of the gardens to meet Marcelle coming back from a singing lesson. Some of them had pieces of straw and twigs fallen from the trees in their bills, and made direct flight for the roof of the Palace, where doubtless they were already commencing to build in the galleries or on the capitals of the pillars. He insensibly began to connect the act of the pigeons with Carlton's conversation concerning Marcelle. She, too, would doubtless, in the not now distant future, be taking flight to make a new home. The thought gave him a pang that he recognised as being deeper than his pseudo-fatherhood accounted for. He walked quickly along the broad terrace, crossed the gardens, scarcely glancing at the flower beds gay with crocuses and budding hyacinths, and passed out at the gate of the Rue de Médicis. He crossed the road near the fountain and walked

moodily down the Rue Soufflot. He had not gone far ere he met Marcelle; who, dressed in a neat toilette of dark blue serge and a hat from the Louvre gay with the promise of Spring but singularly becoming, was hastening along with music case in hand, chatting gaily with a fellow-pupil of Monsieur Bretagne. On seeing Brand she nodded to her companion, and the latter crossed the road, and waving her hand turned down the Rue Toullier.

"What is the matter, papa?" asked Marcelle, as they walked back through the gardens. "You are so silent, and has anything occurred to vex you? Has Vivienne again been intractable?"

"No, *ma mie*," he replied, forced to laugh in spite of himself at the girl's concerned face. But the laugh did not somehow reassure her.

"There is something, poor papa! Cannot you tell me what!" slipping her arm through his easily, for there was little difference now in their height, and looking up into his face pleadingly.

"Nothing much," he replied, slowly,

"only, Marcelle, don't you realise that you are no longer merely a girl. That you are nearly, if not quite, a woman. That some day it may be that someone will come and carry you off. That someone may want you to look after them as I have looked after you. All these things happen in time."

She was silent. At the back of her mind there existed a fear of something happening such as she had just heard described. But every time she had thrust it back when the thought had obtruded itself. Surely there could come no time when she would have to leave papa? It would not do to think of it. Now there were tears creeping into her eyes. Tears wrung out by the slowly acquired knowledge that, apart from papa, existence would be intolerable. It was difficult to extricate herself, but her woman's wit saved her.

"But you are strong, papa," she said at length, with her head bent, "I have often heard you say so. See, I cannot remember you ever being ill, except once," she added hastily, "and that was when I was a very little girl."

"Yes, but *ma mie*," Brand said, slowly,

misunderstanding her, "I cannot use force to keep you. The day has gone by when papas could lay violent hands on suitors, and turn or kick them from their castle doors. And besides, you might wish to go."

"What has come to you, my papa? You are sad, and——stupid. You, who are neither so seldom. I meant that as long as you were here, I should stay with you. That is," she added, quite softly, "unless you wish to get rid of me. Oh, papa, I did not mean you to fight anyone. I meant that you were strong in health, and that you would live a long while, and that——. But I don't want to talk about this any more."

Brand saw that she was upset, and so he said, "Let us turn down this side walk and make a tour of the gardens before we go in. I shall never send you away, *ma p'vere p'tite*, rest assured. Let us talk of M'sieu Geoffrey."

"You have been in to see him, then? How is the picture getting on? I do hope that he will get a bronze. Will he?"

"I am afraid that is too much to hope," replied Brand, smiling at her enthusiasm, "you see he has only been working two

years altogether, and in oils only about fifteen months. If he were not really clever he would not be likely to even obtain a white ticket, which, however, he is almost certain to receive if he has any luck at all."

"Did he ask for me or say when he was again coming in to see us?" questioned Marcelle.

"I don't think he did," replied Brand, after consideration.

"Oh, the wretch!" said Marcelle, laughingly. "When next I meet M'sieu Carlton in the street I pass by. I do not know him."

"He won't bring you any more flowers, which he goes all the way to the market to get, if you do. Or any bon-bons."

"What then? You, *mon cher* papa, shall double your privileges and give me either money to buy them, or, what is better, bring twice as many as you usually do to me yourself."

"That is all very well; but poor papa cannot compete with M'sieu Geoffrey for gallantry."

"Why not, indeed? Alas, we are arrived. It seems too fresh and nice to go in. I only

hope Vivienne has kept up a good fire for tea in the salon."

After all Carlton did drop in during the evening, elated by the fact that the sedges had been conquered, and the picture had consequently advanced a stage further towards completion.

Brand sat in the corner of the salon near the fire; for though inhospitable stoves were fitted in most rooms of the house, in one or two there were open hearths almost contemporary with the Luxembourg, and on them a fire (as an English person would understand it) was still possible.

He watched the two carefully. Marcelle at the piano, and Carlton turning over her music for her. A sense of pain struck him. It seemed so unlikely that Marcelle did not care for so pleasant and eligible a young fellow, with everything in his prospects to recommend him. Then instantly, like a flash came the memory of her mother and Jacques Belot! A barrier seemed suddenly to erect itself between them. A feeling of joy swept through his heart like a tempest; gladness that the man was English, with probably prejudices that would be insur-

mountable. But Brand was a strong man. Though Marcelle had stolen week by week, month by month, year by year, into the inmost recesses of his heart, he understood with self-disgust what this joy that now so suddenly possessed him meant.

If she cared for Carlton, and the brightness of her eyes and the flush in her cheeks which he saw now surely meant that she did, even if she was as yet unaware of it herself, he would tear down this barrier, cost him what it might. Her mother had surely suffered enough. Was not her daughter entitled to happiness if it came her way? And yet! He laughed so bitterly unconsciously that Marcelle rose abruptly and came over to where he was sitting, and an expression of frank surprise came into Carlton's face.

"What is it, papa?" the girl asked anxiously, falling on her knees beside him.

"Nothing, little one," he replied. "Goon with your playing. It was only a memory."

"Oh, my poor papa, it could not have been a pleasant one, though you laughed; it could not have been a pleasant matter you were remembering."

"Never mind, *ma mie*. It happened a very long while ago. Go and sing me—

'When the sun sinks low,
And through the mead the lengthening shadows come and go,
Then o'er the distant hills apace
Climbs up Night's Queen with silvern face.

'Then in her mystic kingdom rare,
I wander 'mid the starry throng
Of heroes and their ladies fair,
And listen to the minstrel song.'

I shall think no more of it then."

But even whilst Marcelle's voice was floating on the air subduedly and sweet, the problem facing him rose up like a shadow of terrifying mien. And a voice seemed to say that it was honour, and not inclination, which urged him to tell Carlton the whole miserable story and leave him to judge.

There were two people at least in the house in the Rue du Luxembourg who were a long while ere sleep came to them that night.

Brand lay awake anxiously going over the situation with its possible developments and complications. His sense of justice to Carlton urged him to speak at once of the circumstances of Marcelle's birth. But his

own heart dictating this course as well made him chary of taking it, lest he should lay himself open to the imputation that he had spoiled Marcelle's chance of happiness from selfish motives after all. It was with an intolerable sense of pain that he recognised how much she really was to him in quite a different sense from that which he had ever realised before. Yes, it would be best to wait. In the end he must, of course, speak. And yet no. Why should he ruin the happiness of her he loved better than anything else in the whole world. If Carlton asked him for her history he must give it, or so much of it as honour impelled. But if not, well—when she was gone he would feel that he had done his best; that he had been true to his charge. Carlton ought to have learned enough of the Quartier to see the risk he ran in taking a girl for his wife of whom he knew no more, probably, than that she was the ward of an artist with whom he had become acquainted.

Marcelle also lay awake. Thinking, too. Carlton had for the first time seemed strange to her. He had suddenly, as it were, and apparently without a transition state, passed

from the role of *bon camarade* to an undefinable one midway between a friend and a lover. Papa's talk in the Gardens during the afternoon had disquieted her ; Carlton's looks and speeches during the evening had added to the disquietude possessing her. She had no one to whom she could tell her secret, no one in whom to confide, or of whom to seek advice. She felt a surging wave of motherlessness sweep over her, and she lay on her face amid her pillows and sobbed. Papa surely loved her no longer, that he was so bent on thrusting her into the arms of some lover, who, during the last hour or two, seemed to be taking a definite shape in the poem of her comrade of only yesterday.

Would Papa not see that she never wanted to leave him ? What had she done that he should seem so eager for her to go ? Never mind, after all she could say no. The girls of the Quartier could at least do that or " Yes." She would not be obliged to do as Hermione Boissy, and accept any alliance her parents chose for her. And yet it would not be easy to say " No," for she liked M'sieu Geoffrey so well that she would not

like to pain him. The world which had been hitherto so fair to her, the world which even Sœur Agatha's strictures failed to rob of its sweetness, had suddenly become a place of pain, trouble, and unanticipated complications. All she wanted was to stay with her dear papa always. And yet! Why did all her thoughts end so?

And yet!

Whilst she was trying to untangle this knot in her life which had presented itself with such suddenness, a knowledge seemed to grow in her heart, so swiftly as she lay there that she could almost imagine that it had been there all the time, which told her to be with papa always in the old way was not actually all that she required. The thought at first terrified her. She stretched out her white arms as though to thrust it back into the darkness surrounding her like a wall. It would not be thrust back, however; but grew so quickly that it seemed to smother her. The blood rushed from her heart, and sped galloping through her veins, and with a cry as though she had seen something terrible she threw herself back, and hid her burning face beneath the clothes.

In the morning, in self-defence, she dawdled over her toilette ; wondering at the pallor of the face which looked back at her half-startled from the glass, till she thought papa would have tired of waiting for her, and would have perhaps gone into the studio. It would be so terrible not to have time, after first seeing him, in which to collect herself.

Brand was still at the table, however, and glanced up as she entered. He noticed her pallor, which gave place to a deep flush as she came over to him and kissed him, not as usual on the cheeks, but on his forehead. A sudden instinct seemed to tell him to take no notice of the change in her mode of greeting. His own heart gave a throb of pain.

He had nearly finished his breakfast, but he lingered at the table reading *Le Matin*, and regarding her curiously as she sat with her eyes bent upon her plate.

At last she spoke with all the naturalness she could command. Out of all this tangled skein of her existence a means of temporary escape had suddenly presented itself.

"Papa," she said slowly, "I have to go

to the Convent this morning for a lesson in Italian. Sœur Agatha was saying only the other day that I had lately neglected several things for my music. She is anxious for me to again take the Prize for Languages—thanks to you my English is excellent she says—and cannot” (a note of eagerness crept into her voice) “I remain at the Convent for a fortnight. Then I think I should be sure of the prize. This is my last term,” she went on; “you see I have only been to take languages, mathematics, and dancing for a long time past. And I do so want to see a little more of the girls. When one has left school for ever there will not be much chance. You see they live either in the Provinces or on the other side of the river. And I here. They don’t much care to come over into the Quartier. Do say yes.”

“But what of poor papa,” exclaimed Brand involuntarily. Only the next instant to regret that he had done so.

Marcelle went very white. After all was this one loophole of escape to be denied her? And for so short a time. Only till she could become accustomed to this new feeling which possessed her, and which she feared would

choke her as she sat there. Just till she could be sure of herself.

Brand must have realised something of the struggle she was making to preserve her self-possession, for he added hastily, before she could say a word :

"Just as you wish, *ma mie*. Only don't forget that poor papa will miss you."

"A thousand thanks, papa. You are always good to me. How wilful I must seem to you sometimes. Ah, it is a little boy you should have adopted, not a girl with unaccountable ways and freaks and whims. A girl not always as good to the best papa in the world as she should be."

"What is the rhyme you used to sing about little boys?" rejoined Brand, to say something. Marcelle repeated it, and he continued, "A little boy, indeed! No, thank you. If little boys are all that the rhyme says, I prefer little girls. Even when they are no longer so, and even are whimsical. Ask Vivienne or Marie to go with you, I do not like you going all that way alone, and come in to bid me good-bye."

The speaker rose and went away into the studio to work. But the picture did not

progress rapidly, for when Marcelle came rushing in to bid him adieu an hour later, he had spent most of the time in thought. Standing in front of the easel, palette and brushes in hand, with the little worm-like convolutions of paint, much as when he had squeezed them from the tubes.

In the peaceful atmosphere of the Convent, in the company of the other girls, with Sœur Clemence to encourage her in her calm, rich-toned voice, and Sœur Agatha to keep her mind fixed on her studies, Marcelle's terror of the tangle of life, as she called it to herself, wore off, and her accustomed wit and light-heartedness re-asserted itself. The end of the fortnight seemed so far off. And when she thought of it at all, it was with hopefulness that she would when the time came find herself equal to the burden of life put upon her.

Hermione and she talked over the former's approaching marriage. Marcelle wondered vaguely whether she would be able to obey papa to such an extent as to marry Carlton without loving him. Surely that was not much if Hermione could accept with equanimity M'sieu Ducrot, who was

fifty-five and plain, simply because he was rich, and her parents had arranged it all for her.

But when she considered the matter the old pain came creeping back through her veins, and now she understood what it really meant it hurt her the more.

CHAPTER V

JACQUES BELOT LOSES THE GAME

IN a little café in one of the narrow streets off the wider Rue Lepic, a street which ran dirty and ill-paved up towards the Butte Montmartre, a man sat smoking a poor quality cigar. Outside in the glaring sunshine, which fell on that side of the street making a line of gray whiteness as well defined, from the shadow cast by the opposite roofs, as though ruled with a straight edge, unwashed, half-dressed children were playing and quarrelling like dogs, spitting out dirty words at each other, and tearing the few clothes they had off one another's backs. Children whose existence was bounded by the streets within a radius of a quarter of a mile of the Rue Lepic, with an occasional treat of being taken to the scorched, rubbish-strewn slopes running down from the

Église du Sacré Cœur. The passers-by were of the labouring class, dirty, slouching loafers with blue blouses open at the neck, and women who never seemed to finish their toilettes till the night ; and till then standing at doors or windows showed bare arms, shoulders and necks to the sunlight. Most of these did nothing save idle and gossip till night fell, and then they attired themselves and descended upon the Place Blanche and Cafés of the Boulevard de Clichy. Some few of the more respectable of them, however, worked in the laundries in the immediate neighbourhood, in which the elaborate *lingerie* of the frequenters of the Moulin Rouge, Élysée Montmartre and minor balls was rendered miraculously spotless amid an atmosphere and surroundings far from cleanly.

It was a corner of the Paris concerning which not much is known except to the police.

The man smoking in the café was quite alone. The mechanics and porters of the market near the Place St. Pierre who frequented the establishment had come and gone, taking away hunks of bread in their

hands, and the last piece of sausage or cheese in their mouths. The man still left was thinking, wondering if to repair his tottering fortunes he dare attempt the *coup* that had come into a brain rendered acute and villainous by long practice and a natural bias. If he had had a grievance, other than that all of his kind possess against those in a better position than themselves he would have drunk the remainder of his half litre of cheap wine at once, and set off down the sloping streets leading to the Rue de la Fayette to settle it, and thence made his way across the river by means of the Pont des Arts. But he wanted money. And it was, he had already decided, not worth his while to toil these miles to the Luxembourg Quartier for nothing.

He had not been on the other side of the Seine for more than three years, but when there he had been fortunate in seeing what he wanted and in gaining the information he was now hoping to turn to some good account. The fruit must be ripe for plucking by now, he had reasoned, and with anything like luck he might make a satisfactory *coup*. Yes, it was worth trying. He had little or

nothing in his pocket, and it was simply abominable that a clever fellow like he should ever have to turn to and really work. He knocked with the bottom of his glass on the table, threw one of the few francs he had on to the grimy marble top, and asked the proprietor who came forward at his summons to be so obliging as to bring him a clothes brush.

His clothes were still quite presentable, *grâce à Dieu*; and, when he had twisted his moustache, now becoming grey, and straightened himself generally in front of the dingy mirror near the door, he felt fairly satisfied with his appearance. He lit another cigar and set off down the street; throwing a careless, vulgar compliment, after the manner of his kind, to a girl who was crossing it with her ragged shawl all off her bare shoulders, and who made a grimace at him for his pains.

By a little after mid-day he had reached the river end of the Boulevard St. Michel. He walked up it till he came to a narrow street on the left hand side of which he knew there was a café frequented by students and artists of the lesser sort. The April day

was almost as warm as June, and already many of the *habitués* had indicated to the proprietor their preference for *déjeuner* in the open air. As a consequence the usual crop of little tables and accompanying chairs had made their appearance on the sidewalk. They were all full, he noticed, and so he entered the café itself, and sat down in a corner near the doorway. There were several students near him, and they were talking in the free and easy manner of their class. One was evidently an Englishman, his appearance told him this much, even if his French had been less open than it was to adverse criticism.

At first the listener was only bored. He wondered how any people could spend so much time over discussing pictures which possibly no one would ever buy, and in Art jargon which few other human beings save students could possibly understand. All this "low tones," "high lights," "modelling of the torso;" and excited argument over the virtues of the different modes of producing flesh tints caused him to shrug his shoulders and kick his heels together impatiently beneath the table.



"It doesn't do for me to be so short of money," he said to himself at length; "it makes me bad tempered and wishful to knock the heads of the young asses together."

He had been listening for some considerable time (for one never knew, he always argued, when a hint of value might be picked up) when he caught the mention of Brand's name.

"I never saw anything finer than Georges Brand's 'Le Bain de Suzanne.' Such a figure! Pure undiluted drawing, *mon ami*," exclaimed the young fellow who had spoken. "When I can paint like that——"

"You'll sell your pictures, as he does, for 20,000 francs a-piece, and settle down. A *marriage d'inclination* with the first pretty woman who will have you," a companion interjected.

"And who wouldn't have him?" asked a third, with a whistle.

"If old Tissot illustrates the Apocrypha I should advise him to buy 'Le Bain de Suzanne' for a frontispiece."

They all laughed. There seemed such a comical difference between the discreet

Tissot and Brand's able though insistent art.

"What amused me," said the Englishman, speaking slowly because he wished to use with good effect a few bits of argot he had picked up from a little sloe-eyed *étudiante* who had made a dead set at him, and because he had not yet acquired proficiency in irregular verbs, "and what fetched me most was the faces of the elders. If you had taken all the fine modelling away, and translated the expressions into pure line, a real good thing, fit for 'Le Courrier Français,' would have been left."

"'Le Courrier Français!' *Ma foi!* What would M'sieu Brand say?"

No one seemed to know, and so the talk decentralized itself for a moment or two, and then reverted to Brand again.

"How's your friend M'sieu Carlton?" asked one of the trio, addressing the Englishman.

"Oh, very well. But I haven't seen much of him lately——"

"No," laughed the other two, and the one who had inquired for Carlton added, "and I can guess why."

"He's got a studio now in the Rue de Luxembourg. We had a jolly time warming it for him a few weeks ago."

"Oh, I daresay! But how about Mademoiselle Brand?"

"*Bonheur*," corrected the other. And they laughed.

"There's some strange story about her, isn't there?" enquired the Englishman meditatively. "Poor old Geoffrey. He's clean gone on Mamzelle Marcelle's bright eyes and pretty figure."

"There was a blackguard named, let me see! Buloy? Bulot? No. Ah, I have it, Belot. Yes, that's it, Belot; mixed up in it, somehow. Years ago, of course," the speaker added, not noticing that the man at the next table moved uneasily, "but I heard the story a year or two since from a chap who knew Morneau, the man who lives in Florence, and paints those Italian studies you see over at Cavalari's in the Rue Drouot. I forget what it was, but there is something queer about it."

"Well, I must be off to the Beaux Arts," said the speaker, after a pause. "You coming, Detaille?"

The two Frenchmen nodded to their companion and went out, leaving him to finish his wine alone.

He was startled a minute or two later by being addressed by the stranger at the next table, who said in a polite tone :

" Pardon, M'sieu. I think I heard you and your companions speaking just now of M'sieu Georges Brand ? "

" Yes, M'sieu, you did. "

" He lives in the Rue du Luxembourg. No.—ah, yes—No. 500, " as the student mentioned the figures. " And then there is a compatriot of M'sieu's, " bowing, " a young and clever artist, M'sieu Geoffrey Carlton, in the same street. "

" Next door, " said the younger man, almost involuntarily, as, although he did not like this inquisitive stranger, he did not wish to be rude.

Several other questions followed, to which he felt unable to avoid replying ; but at the query as to Carlton's position as regarded money he fired up.

" Really, M'sieu, " he exclaimed, in the best French he could muster. " I am not

aware that I have any right to inform you of M'sieu Carlton's affairs, even if I know them ; or, for the matter of that, if you will excuse me saying so, whether you have any right to ask."

The questioner saw that he had pursued his enquiries quite far enough.

"I am exceedingly sorry," he said suavely, "if you are offended, M'sieu ; but my excuse must be that I am deeply interested in all that appertains to art, and used to know M'sieu Brand before he became a famous artist."

The listener nodded a not over-cordial acceptance of the apology and explanation, and, drinking up his wine hastily, he got up and went out.

"I don't half like his impudence," said he to himself, as he strode up the street, with which laconic reflection the subject was dismissed from his mind.

An hour later, whilst Brand was at work in his studio, the door bell of the ground floor *appartement* rang in the courtyard, and a few moments later Marie entered with a card on a brass salver.

He was not expecting visitors, so he took

it from her with a certain amount of curiosity. It bore the name—

“ M. ORPHÉE BIGNARD,”

and no address.

“ What is the gentleman like, Marie?” he asked. “ I am engaged.”

“ He is tall and handsome,” added Marie, with a slight blush, for the visitor had paid her a compliment which her *chic* appearance, trim waist, and creaseless bodice had suggested.

“ You have not seen him before? He has not called before?”

“ No, M’sieu; but he said that his business was urgent.”

“ Very well, show him in,” said Brand, after a moment’s consideration.

In less than five minutes the studio door again opened, and a strangely familiar figure was disclosed to the artist’s astonished gaze.

“ You did not expect to see me, M’sieu Brand,” exclaimed the visitor, coolly. “ Nothing but the most urgent necessity would have forced me to trouble you with my presence again after our last interview.”

The speaker laid a stress upon the "last." And then continued, as his listener did not speak, "Pardon the subterfuge of my sending in the card of a friend."

Brand was boiling over with anger, but the cool effrontery of the man, and the unexpectedness of his re-appearance after all these years for the moment kept him silent.

At last, however, he said, controlling himself with an effort, without deigning to request his visitor to be seated, "I am at a loss to conceive the reason of your intrusion, M'sieu Belot. It will doubtless recur to you that at our last meeting to which you have already referred you gave your word of honour" (the last word seemed to impinge the air, so full of scorn was the speaker's tone) "not to trouble me again. Nay, you did something more than this. I think you will recollect what. And when I tell you that the document in question is in the possession of my solicitor, it may occur to you that to efface yourself, if not from Paris, at least from my knowledge, and that possibly of the police, will be a prudent act."

But Jacques Belot was not to be got rid of in this way, nor so easily.

"M'sieu misjudges me, I fear," he replied, without irritation, "I can assure him that the necessity for troubling him is as unpleasant to me as to him."

Brand was, of course, well aware that underneath this superficial politeness there was only lurking a demand for money. He was not going to give it to the scoundrel. Marcelle was away at the Convent. Belot would not meet her. But all the same it would be worth while to see what the rascal was meditating.

"I have nothing further to say," he exclaimed, taking up his pallet and brushes to intimate that the conversation was at an end.

At last Jacques Belot was roused.

The calmness of the man, who had recommenced painting, gave him an uncomfortable feeling that Brand must have him in his power. There was nothing now to be gained by concealment, whilst something might accrue to his benefit if he played his cards boldly.

"M'sieu must pardon my interrupting

him again," he began, hastening to continue as he saw Brand's movement of growing irritation. "I am going to keep my word of *honour* (he laughed after the last word) so far as M'sieu is concerned. But one must live. Life is not all success, not all— Well, I forget the phrase; no matter. You thought, M'sieu, that I was here to ask for money. That is an error. M'sieu need give me nothing; but I have no doubt that M'sieu Carlton" (Brand started slightly) "will find any information I may be disposed to afford him of value. The English are stupid people; but they are good. Oh, so good. An English mother would not care for her son to marry a girl however virtuous she were and beautiful, whose father was a negligible fact, although her son might himself be the doubtful papa of many. That is one form of goodness. It is English!"

"You damned scoundrel," shouted Brand, throwing down his brushes and striding across the floor and seizing the man by the throat. "I've a mind to choke the life out of you, and kick your rascally carcass into the gutter afterwards."

Belot's face turned scarlet and then

livid. There was a gurgling rattle in his throat.

At the sight of the livid face Brand's unthinking rage cooled. He relaxed his hold, and the man he had nearly throttled with his vice-like grasp sank inert on the floor. By the time the latter had recovered sufficiently to drag himself on to his feet Brand had made up his mind rapidly how to act.

Carlton he knew was at the Beaux Arts and would not be back for some hours, as he had mentioned he was dining at a restaurant across the river with some friends. Before to-morrow he could ensure Belot being in custody. He had thought over the advantage to be gained by once more buying him off; and had immediately rejected it. But if he were not arrested by midnight there would still be time to do that. Silence for a year might be easily purchased, and when once Carlton and Marcelle were married they must leave for England. And if nothing came of the former's suit Belot would be powerless.

"I have not done with you yet," Brand said, as soon as the still dazed man had fumblingly loosened and re-adjusted his cravat.

"Listen! M'sieu Carlton is not home, believe it or not as you please," he added, noting the look of incredulity on the hearer's face. "He will not be at home till so late that you will have no chance of seeing him. If you are still of the opinion that it can answer your purpose to see him to-morrow, come to see me before you go to him. I will say no more, but it may prove worth your while. Now go. I will not trouble my servant to show you the way."

Jacques Belot turned without a word and half-stumbled, half-walked across the salon, down the corridor into the courtyard and thence into the street. The fresh air revived him, and he commenced to reckon up the sum total of the interview. If it had not been for Brand's closing words about seeing him again he must have admitted that he was a beaten man. He crossed the road, after giving a glance over the face of the house next door to that out of which he had come, where he knew Carlton lived, and entered the Gardens. He chose one of the less frequented paths and seated himself on a chair not far from the group "Adam and his Family."

The trees were in partial leaf, tender, yellow-green, and the birds twittered and fluttered near him in anxious search for building materials. Some perched on the edge of the water of the fountain basin, thirstily dipped their bills into it, and threw back their black and brown heads sharply as they drank. He noticed nothing, however. He still felt Brand's fingers at his throat, and tugged to get his rumpled collar high enough to hide any mark of their iron pressure which might remain.

It took him some time to decide on his course of action.

At length he felt in his pocket. It contained a few francs and what? He pulled it out, and wondered vaguely why he had not used it a little while since when Brand rushed upon him. Then he remembered the grip on his throat had taken all his breath away. Never mind, it might be useful yet. He put the weapon back carefully. He was hungry; there were sufficient francs to get him a good dinner, and a bed at one of the little hotels, and to-morrow he might be rich again. Anyway, to-morrow must look after itself.

He got up, walked through the gardens, and then left them by the gate of the Rue de Vaugirard, crossed the roadway, and passing the Odéon Theatre, he went across the wide Square and along the whole length of the Rue de l'Odéon, and then into a side street leading into the Boulevard St. Germain. Half-way down this he entered a dark little café of sinister appearance. It would do as well as any, and in addition he was not altogether unknown there.

He had an absinthe, and then fell asleep.

People came in, but he did not wake up till the lights were lit. Then he roused himself, and ordered a dinner of three courses, and a half-litre of *vin ordinaire*.

The Café was fairly full by this time, the company was none of the best. Stowed away in this narrow, dirty street, it mattered little to the proprietor who his guests were so long as they paid for what they had.

Jacques Belot was sitting eating his dinner and thinking deeply, when two men who had taken as much cognac as they could carry, got into dispute. It was difficult to say afterwards how what followed had hap-

pened. Monsieur le Propriétaire, who the next day was a man of importance beyond his wont, and much questioned by the influx of customers of a sort which the event brought to his house, could never give any clear account of the affair. The quarrel, however, soon assumed a serious aspect. A knife was picked off the table by one of the men, and a gash across his opponent's face resulted in a scuffle. The noise became considerable, and one of the women amongst those present ran out of the Café shrieking murder.

A minute or two later, and three gendarmes, who had been passing the end of the street on their way to duty on the Boulevard St. Germain, arrived on the scene.

When Jacques Belot caught sight of them pushing their way through the swing doors of the Café a great fear surged up in his heart. Supposing they had come for him, or failing this definite object, should recognize him?

Had he lost the game after all, and through this cursed Englishman outwitting him?

As he saw the gendarmes struggling

through the knot of intervening people who surrounded the combatants, having left their seats the more easily to witness the fight, he rose and turned to force his way into the passage opening at the far side of the room leading to the upstairs apartments, instead of keeping quiet and remaining seated.

One of the three gendarmes spoke hurriedly to his companions, and then commenced to push his way towards Belot through the people, and the chairs and tables. Seeing the sergeant coming, Belot slipped his hand hurriedly into his right pocket. What a pity, he thought, what a thousand pities now that he had not used the thing he grasped firmly in his hand earlier in the day, when he was in the studio with his enemy striding menacingly towards him. But it was no use indulging in vain regrets, the time for action had arrived.

The sergeant was stout, with a red face and huge white moustache, and the tables were so close together that it gave Belot, standing with his back against the wall, time. When there were only about three yards between them there came a spit of flame, a sharp report, a cry from the ser-

geant, and a small cloud of smoke, which floated up to the dingy ceiling. The fat man fell back with a groan, heavily and, knocking over a table, crashed to the ground between two chairs.

There was an instant stampede ; but above the din could be heard the cry of the Police—

“ Seize the villain ! ”

The two officers rushed forward, hurling the men who stood in their way aside, and abandoning the two who had been fighting. There was a second spit of flame, and a man near the door clapped his hand to his side, spun half-round, and then fell crash against the glazed door with his shoulder through the glass panel.

“ Baissez ! ” shouted one of the police to his comrade, and ducking their heads they both ran in to seize the murderer round the body.

But there was still another flash ere they reached him, and Belot, who had been too quick for them, fell almost on top of the nearest gendarme, with a bullet in his brain. His last thought, as he pressed the revolver to his temple and pulled the trigger, had been

that it was better to go out of the world thus than by the agency of the guillotine.

The gendarmes tried to pull him to his feet, scarcely for the moment realizing what had happened. The dead weight soon told them that their efforts to make him stand up would be fruitless. He would no longer, however, be able to run away, so they released their hold, and the body slid, slouching in a heap, on to the sawdust sprinkled floor.

The fat sergeant also proved to be quite dead. The man at the door still breathed, but the scarlet patch on the ground was not reassuring. He was, however, hurried away in a hastily summoned ambulance to the Clinique. And a small cordon of police then occupied the pavement outside, after the Café had been cleared.

Inside Belot lay as he had fallen, the revolver still in his hand. A victim to a certain extent of an error which his guilty conscience had caused him to make, in that Brand had not yet given notice to the police, and therefore, had he kept still he might in the confusion have passed unrecognized, and afterwards have made good his escape.

That he had killed himself did not matter much ; for when the police officers, before closing the Café, had casually turned him over to see whether he had any life in him, he was at once recognised by a gendarme who had once been stationed in the Belleville Quartier.

"The very fellow ! That Belot," the officer exclaimed chagrined ; "the man we have wanted for three years past for the affair in the Rue de la Lunette at Belleville. O! *Sacré !* Just our luck."

CHAPTER VI

AT THE CAFÉ RICHELIEU

"Love, is it love or sleep, or shadow or light
That lies between thine eyelids and thine eyes?"

ABOUT ten o'clock the same evening Brand went out. The Gardens had just been closed, and so he was forced to turn to the right and reach the upper end of the Boulevard St. Michel by way of the Rue Auguste Comte.

The wide Boulevard stretching down in a slight curve to the Quai St. Michel and Ile de la Cité was gay with gas lights shining rather yellowly in the humid April air. He walked quickly, as the night was somewhat chilly after the brilliant, warm sunshine of the day. Ere he reached the turning to the Café de la Bonne Nouvelle the barefooted newsboys and their shabby competitors of greater age came rushing up the pavement shouting "*Voilà-la La Presse !*"

Le Soir ! Demandez *Le Soir*," in strident tones.

There had been some racing at Auteuil, and the papers were almost torn from the hands of the newsboys by eager students and passers-by who hoped that fortune had favoured their "fancy."

Brand took little or no interest in racing apart from witnessing the actual thing, but just as he was turning the corner a vendor of *La Presse*, to attract purchasers other than those interested in sport, yelled out almost in his ear, "Horrible affair in a café near the Odéon! Assassination of a Sergeant of Police. Suicide of noted criminal!"

Brand turned and bought a *Presse*, and as he walked on, ran his eye down the column devoted to late news. Suddenly this tragedy, which was described with a wealth of imaginative detail, assumed a keen personal interest. A line at the bottom of the last paragraph had caught his eye. "It is stated that the assassin is none other than the criminal, Jacques Belot, whose arrest, for the murder of a young woman in the Belleville Quartier, has been the object of the police for some time past."

So what had been worrying him all the way down the Boulevard, and had tormented him ever since the studio door had closed that afternoon on the man now dead was removed. The relaxed tension for the moment caused him to almost stumble. There must be some justice in life after all!

He read through the details again carefully, standing underneath a lamp, and then, recognising that there could be no doubt as to the man's identity, he thrust the paper into his pocket and walked on smartly to the Café.

Louys was there as he anticipated; sitting in the corner which from long association they had got to regard as peculiarly their own. In this corner, indeed, they had their dinner together most evenings when Marcelle was at school or visiting a friend. Père Grandet, it was true, had been gathered to his fathers, and now reposed for the term permitted him in the Montparnasse Cemetery till the plot of ground was required for a later comer, but Madame and her eldest son carried on the establishment. And Brand, on pushing open the door, found her smiling the usual welcome to him

from behind the dwarf glass screen of the *bureau*.

"M'sieu is not looking well," she exclaimed. "I trust that it is nothing serious?"

Brand smiled back at her, and replied politely, "No, Madame, I thank you. Merely fatigue."

Madame looked relieved, and her "That is well, M'sieu works too hard, he must be careful," followed him to his seat, at his friend's side.

"Well, *mon ami*," exclaimed the latter, shaking hands, "you look fagged."

And then Brand, thrusting the copy of *La Presse* into the speaker's hand, told him what had occurred during the afternoon.

"Serves the *canaille* right," exclaimed the latter when he had finished reading the report. "But tell me, were you not about to give him any money? You had decided, of course to inform the police."

"I scarcely know. It all had to be considered finally," rejoined Brand; "there was Marcelle to think of, and Carlton——"

"You may leave *him* out," interrupted

Louys meaningly, "Bah! what a wretch, that Belot."

Brand took no notice of the emphasis. He knew what his friend had always thought, but he was not disposed to agree with him. The idea was preposterous. And yet if it only might be!

They talked for a little while of the tragedy which had ridded the Quartier of an example of clever scoundrelism, and had extricated him out of a troublesome *impasse* so opportunely, and then the conversation was turned into a more pleasant channel. Louys had sold his big picture to Schiller in the Rue Drouot before sending it into the Salon. And, though a successful artist, it was possible for him to take pleasure in talking on this topic for a considerable space of time.

A *chanteuse*, with a good voice ruined by singing in smoke-laden atmospheres and in the open air, was rendering a little chanson of Catulle Mendes, of the usual type (therefore untranslatable) at the end of the room, but they took little notice of her. A Spanish dancer, who was stated to be as good as Carmencita, but who lacked the necessary

advertisement of a scandalous intrigue with a prince to ensure her wide fame, was going to dance at eleven-thirty. Brand decided not to stop. He wanted to get home and think things over. Louys said he would walk up as far as the Carrefour with him and then come back for the Spanish girl's dancing.

Brand was so relieved by Belot's death that he linked his arm in that of Louys, and went away up the Boulevard singing a snatch of a topical song in an undertone. Several women looked round at him and smiled. He was well-known, and they had not often seen him of late in such high spirits.

One of the women's voices caused a sudden recrudescence of a memory, and his high spirits vanished. The whole scene came before him with strange vitality after nearly fourteen years. Even the words recurred, "Remember Mathilde Sievinski does not forget."

He could have turned back and struck the woman whose voice had revived this painful memory.

His companion felt him start as the air he was humming died upon his lips.

"What's the matter?" he enquired anxiously.

"Nothing! Félicien," was the reply; "I am merely stupidly upset by my visitor this afternoon."

But when the two parted at the Carrefour Brand suddenly turned as he stepped off the pavement to cross the road, and said, "By the way, do you know what has become of her? I have known or seen nothing of her for several years."

"Her?" repeated his companion questioningly, and then adding as he suddenly realised to whom the speaker referred, "Oh, her. She is living in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette, I believe, and frequents the Folies Bèrgères. Time, *mon ami*, has not dealt gently with her. But you are with the ghosts to-night. Why think of her? Pull yourself together, and when you get in have something hot."

"Perhaps I am," replied Brand, with an unmirthful smile, "but ghosts will walk. I shall have to send for Marcelle to come back."

"That's it," Louys laughed back; "there is nothing like youth and beauty to dissi-

pate such ghosts as yours, *mon ami*. Good-night."

When he got home Brand found a letter for him from Marcelle asking that she might remain at the Convent for another week or ten days to complete some studies. He was inclined to write and refuse, but he had never allowed personal considerations to spoil either her pleasure or interfere with anything for her good, so he sat down and wrote his consent. He could not understand Marcelle of late. Her affection for him seemed to be waning. He missed those little spontaneous outbursts of love and confidences to which he had been accustomed ever since she had been a child. He was often pained ; but too proud to speak. And now this prolonged absence, what did it all mean? He, like many of his kind under similar circumstances, took refuge in cynicism, and a line from a modern play came to his mind to help him to a solution. Yes, he said to himself, there must be some truth in the phrase, "the hope of gratitude is one of the most tenacious of our illusions."

On the afternoon of a week later, Carlton came in to announce that he had received

his white ticket. He was highly elated, and all the morning he had been screwing up his courage to approach Brand with the subject of his love for Marcelle.

When the congratulations were finished he commenced somewhat awkwardly.

"I should like, M'sieu Georges, for you and Mademoiselle to dine with me in celebration of the event at the Café Richelieu across the water. Have I your permission to also invite Madame Félicie to be one of the party?"

"Certainly," replied Brand pleasantly, "but when do you propose to give this little fête? You know, do you not, that Marcelle will not be coming home until the end of the week. Friday at the earliest."

"Then we will make it Sunday," said the young fellow, "if that will suit you."

"I have nothing to clash with it. Sunday? Very well. We can all go together."

"An excellent idea. Then no one will be kept waiting for the others."

And so it was arranged.

About half-past seven on the Sunday evening the little party of four descended from a fiacre and, entering the Café, sat down at

the table which Carlton had reserved for them.

Outside was the usual crowd thronging the wide pavement, and gazing at the people seated at the little tables under the shadow of the striped linen awning, chatting or sipping coffee and American drinks, whilst they regarded the passers-by curiously. The electric lights threw black shadows on the pavement, where there was sufficient space; and sharply defined though fore-shortened, silhouettes of the smart women and well-dressed men who promenaded to and fro. At the corner of the street an advertisement of the Casino de Paris reared itself against a lamp-post, the lettering formed of unevenly burning gas jets in three parts of a circle above the multi-coloured poster in its bronze frame.

Inside, the restaurant was not yet crowded, for it was still early; but there were plenty of diners, most of whom looked up as Carlton and his guests entered, and watched them to their seats; for both Félicie and Marcelle had put on their most ravishing toilettes in honour of the occasion.

Nowhere are pretty women more narrowly

observed than in a Paris café restaurant, and the two ladies of the party came in for that scrutiny which, apt to cross the border line of good breeding, is yet difficult to resent.

The little party of four was, however, much too engrossed in its own affairs to greatly notice the glances of the other diners or the whispered comments which had been evoked.

Marcelle sat opposite Geoffrey, and Félicie had Brand for her *vis-à-vis*.

Carlton was brilliantly happy. He had received information from one of his masters who was intimate with members of the Salon Committee of Adjudication that he was sure of "mention." And, in addition, was not Marcelle, looking lovely and smiling naïvely into his eyes, seated so close to him that her breath as she leaned across the table to hear the better what he said fanned his face? As he gazed at her admiringly and noted the flush which stole into her rounded cheeks he told himself over and over again that he must win her; that she must surely already care for him a little.

Brand alone of the party was somewhat quiet. But if Félicie noticed it the egotism

of spirited youthfulness prevented the other two becoming aware of the circumstance. He conversed with Félicie; and Marcelle and Geoffrey kept up a running chatter between themselves with occasional and momentary discursions into the talk of their elders.

With the dessert came the opportunity for observing their near neighbours. Two English girls, school girls evidently, were dining at a table a few yards off. Pretty, with untouched freshness of colouring and not noticeable irregularity of features, they were yet lacking all that less good-looking French girls would have possessed; *chic*, that is to say, and charm. The father was obviously proud of them; into his placid mind no notion of the incongruities and ineffectiveness of their costumes penetrated. Marcelle, a dainty fay in a costume of soft white silk, over which a trellis of flower sprays ran in unobtrusive taste, clasped her hands together and leaning her arms upon the table said mischievously to Carlton, "Voilà les 'English Mees.' What is wrong with them?" glancing down with satisfaction on her own white shoulders and exquisitely fragile and dainty bodice.

Carlton's eyes travelled slowly in the direction indicated. "Everything," he replied after a pause, "except their faces. They neither know what to wear nor how to put it on."

"And I?"

"Know both," was the ready response. "But we are getting hypercritical. There are some English girls who would be a credit to Doucet or Worth; and who, Mademoiselle, would delude even you into thinking the English a well-dressed nation."

"I am willing to believe it. Do you, M'sieu Geoffrey, remember the lady in pale blue and silver at the Longchamps last month?"

"Yes. But——"

The speaker saw that his listener's attention had wandered, and he left off speaking abruptly to follow her eyes.

A woman was making for the door through the narrow gangway between the tables, having evidently dined with the man accompanying her in a private or inner room. Her dark hair was dressed with negligent grace, and framed a face which was still

handsome though the expression was hard and bold, and her skin and natural complexion had been long ago ruined by the use of cosmetics. She was dressed magnificently in a black and silver toilet, the bodice of which was almost slipping off her exquisite shoulders. And she advanced down the room with the exaggerated, vicious walk of women of her class, her chin slightly elevated and an expression of cynicism about the lines of her mouth. She had approached quite close to Carlton's party ere becoming aware of the four people comprising it.

Her glance fell disdainfully upon them, and rested there sufficiently long for her to scrutinise each individual narrowly.

She started slightly, and pausing for the fraction of a second, her escort trod on the trailing skirt of her dress. Her exclamation of anger caused both Marcelle and Brand, who were sitting with their backs towards her, to glance round sharply.

The latter immediately turned away, but not before his eyes had met those of the woman full, and had seen in her the look of recognition and malice which she strove to hide.

She passed on immediately and went out of the door leading to the Boulevard.

As her escort was helping her into a fiacre she turned to him and said, "You know every one, *mon ami*, who was that pretty girl in white with the two men and the woman at the table near where Boutet was sitting?"

"Don't you know?" was the reply in a tone tinged with an element of suspicion, for the speaker had noted the start his companion had given involuntarily on noticing the party.

"How should I?" she answered, with a smile meant to disarm him, as she sank back into the seat of the carriage.

"How do I know?" replied her companion, jumping in beside her, with an intonation which made her wish to strike him. "The elder man was Georges Brand, the artist. Coining money he must be. The girl was his daughter (the listener did not contradict him). The younger man evidently, from appearances, her *fiancé* or *amant*."

And the speaker laughed.

The woman at his side said nothing, and for a few minutes she was thinking busily.

The carriage sped recklessly along the gaily lit Boulevard till they came to Olympia, where it pulled up short with a scraping sound against the curb. The man assisted his companion to alight, and she stood on the pavement at his side shaking her skirts whilst he placed a couple of francs on the edge of the box, and then they both entered the building the façade of which was gay with many coloured posters of the artists performing, and flaming gas jets.

The little party at the Café Richelieu sat long over their dessert. Brand was more silent than before. This unexpected meeting with Mathilde Sievinski had given him indeed food for thought. The look that she gave him when her eyes met his was not easily mistaken. Félicie noticed that there was something amiss, but she was too experienced in the world's ways to say anything. She had never met Mathilde, and so, though she connected this woman who had just gone out of the Café in some way with her *vis-à-vis* in consequence of the look she had seen her give him, she had no idea as to what episode of the past it referred.

When they had finished dinner Carlton

proposed that they should go to the Ambassadeurs to finish the evening. It had just opened for the season, and there at least there would be a chance of a *tête-à-tête* with Marcelle.

Brand raised no objection, but Carlton's hopes were frustrated, partly by the excellence of the programme and partly by Marcelle herself, who seeing papa was quiet and absent-minded, exerted herself to make him smile, and by her chatter to arouse him.

It was nearly midnight when their fiacre crossed the Pont des Arts, and drove along the Quai to the Rue Dauphine, by way of which and the Rue Monsieur le Prince the Boulevard St. Michel was reached. At last, however, it turned into Félicie's street and set her down at her door ; and then sped up the Boulevard and on through the Rue Auguste Comte to the Rue du Luxembourg.

" May I see you to-morrow ? " asked Carlton tenderly, as he took Marcelle's hand at parting.

" Alas, M'sieu Geoffrey," she said. " I return to school for a few days to-morrow." Adding, seeing his look of disappointment,

"but it is for the last time." With which he had to be content.

A premonition of what would happen possessed Brand, and kept him sleepless far into the night. Doubtless Mathilde would yet have to be reckoned with, and the tangle of events, which had seemed simplified by the death of Belot, again confronted him.

Whilst he was thus gazing moodily out into the future Marcelle slept the quiet slumber of tired, untroubled youth; no longer disturbed by the coming of Love which had at first frightened and distressed her.

The pure, tranquil atmosphere of the Convent had proved a mental and moral tonic during the last few weeks. The converse with Sœur Clemence serving to call out all that was good in her nature.

Her only regret now and during the last few days was, and had been, that the last pages of her life as a schoolgirl were being so rapidly turned over, and that the end of that chapter was approaching with such rapidity.

But she consoled herself with the thought that she would now have time to take better

care of *cher papa*, to see that he was not dull. To sing to him, and talk of his pictures, past, present and to come. Ah! what pictures he painted! There were none like those of papa. And she remembered that he had only yesterday told her how glad he would be to have her at home always. Always!

CHAPTER VII

MATHILDE SIEVINSKI'S ULTIMATUM

NEXT morning Mathilde Sievinski sat in her *appartement* in the Rue Notre Dame de Lorette thinking over the events of the previous evening. The room was furnished with tawdry luxuriousness, and looked out upon the houses immediately opposite and into the well of the courtyard.

In the early morning light coming in at the window on the street side she appeared older than her years. With the coquetry which seldom dies in a Frenchwoman, or in a woman of another nation wedded to Parisian ways, she looked as little as possible in her glass of a morning.

She was seated at an imitation Louis Seize *escritoire* with a sheet of blank paper in front of her, dressed in a loose *saut du lit*

of light China silk, her bare feet thrust partially into high-heeled slippers.

Her mind had the nimbleness of her race, and she rapidly decided upon her course of future action when once she had given the subject a thought.

"Yes," she remarked, thinking aloud and biting the end of her penholder meditatively, "he is still worth marrying."

And she laughed unpleasantly.

She then commenced to write, and having after tearing up several sheets of paper, composed a letter to her satisfaction, she folded it slowly, placed it in a crested envelope and addressed it.

A bell summoned a maid, and in less than an hour the missive was on its way.

"A bombshell," the writer thought, "thrown with precision into the camp of the enemy."

Then she dressed lazily, and went into the little salon adjoining to spend the morning dozing over a Boulevard novelette or skimming the pages of *Le Fin de Siècle* or *Don Juan*.

Brand received the letter late in the afternoon, and, after having read and re-read it,

he locked it away in his bureau. It had startled him, as the writer had intended it should, and again placed him, as it were, looking down a mental and moral *impasse*. He was expecting Carlton to drop in at any moment; and it was, therefore, scarcely worth while for him to consider the matter, or to seek to devise a way out of the difficulty, till the young fellow had been.

That he was unusually disturbed by the contents of the letter he had just received was evident from his expression as he sat smoking in a chair near the open window, having abandoned the work upon which he had been engaged when Marie brought the missive in.

Carlton was late in coming, and Brand fidgeted from time to time. At last, however, the door of the studio opened, and the young fellow walked briskly in.

"Awfully sorry to be late," he said, "but just as I was coming out old Constant was passing, and I had to walk half-way back to the *atelier* with him."

The speaker paused somewhat awkwardly, and Brand, to help him, said laconically:

"Well?"

There was another pause, and Carlton regarded the floor intently. Then he blurted out, "M'sieu Georges, I don't know whatever you'll say, but the fact of the matter is" (he cleared his throat, which had suddenly become parched as he approached the crucial point) "I'm in love with Mademoiselle. I daresay," he continued, glancing up, "that you may be surprised—no, I don't mean exactly that, what the dickens am I saying? but—but you mayn't have noticed it. But it's a fact all the same, and what I've come in for is to ask whether you will permit, whether you have any objection to my telling her so and asking her to marry me."

The listener felt a suffocating grip at his heart. And as he did not for the moment speak, the young fellow went on hurriedly :

"I know she's worlds too good for me. But I've kept straight and all that, and I'm not penniless by any means, and I can work, and I'm in love with my art. You see she has been brought up to all that sort of thing, and I feel sure that we should pull well together. Of course" (as the listener was still silent) "I don't want to marry right away. There are several things to be ar-

ranged, and I should like you and Marcelle—Mademoiselle—to run over to see some of my people ; that is, of course, if I am lucky enough to win her.”

Brand was terribly perturbed. He had, of course in a manner, foreseen all this, but somehow its occurrence had proved none the less distressing.

After a pause he said, slowly, “ My dear fellow. I am not altogether taken by surprise. But it is a matter to which both you and I must give earnest and perhaps painful attention before I can give you the consent for which you have just asked. You know, of course,” he went on, with a touch of pain in his voice, “ that Marcelle was adopted by me when she was a little child ; scarcely, indeed, more than a mere baby. She has grown up as you see her. She has been more than a child to me, and partly, perhaps, because her tenderness and love for me have not been prompted by or taken their rise in ties of blood. Her mother was quite a poor woman, though, I think, a lady in instinct. But——”

“ M’sieu Georges,” interrupted Carlton, impetuously, “ what she is, I know, what

her people were—well, after all, what does it matter?”

Then something in Brand's face made him pause abruptly and catch his breath a little. As his companion said nothing, he went on slowly, and with sudden pallor, “I don't care about any of these things. There is only one thing which could affect me or my people——”

He paused again, and for a minute or two the two men sat looking at each other without saying anything.

Brand's face was also deathly pale. He understood, as though Carlton had completed his sentence, what that “one thing” was. A word of his, and he would perhaps never be parted from Marcelle. It might be that she would in time come to care for him in quite another way. A vision of happiness such as few have ever realised came before him. He forgot that he was middle-aged. The fire of youth seemed to once more pervade him. The struggle was keener and more prolonged than, as a man of honour, he ever liked to admit even to himself. Surely, Marcelle owed him something? Surely, it could not be wrong to

seek thus to repay himself for all the tenderness and care which he had lavished on her? Surely, it would be all right in the end?

But above all these voices there rose the chivalry which had lain dormant in his nature, the chivalry that urged him to let the world repay to the daughter what it owed to the mother for the mercilessness of Fate. He put the vision aside, if it were possible, curtly. His voice, when at last he spoke, seemed to him as though it were outside of himself, but it was steady.

"You need not trouble further about Marcelle's history, *mon ami*," he said, with well-simulated gaiety. "Both her father and mother are dead, and I know nothing of her other relatives. They may be many or few. Who knows? But they can be neglected as a factor of your future."

A look of the intensest relief flashed into his listener's face.

"Thank God," he exclaimed, adding rapidly, "then I have your permission to speak to her?"

"Yes."

"When does she return home?"

"The day after to-morrow."

"Early, M'sieu Georges?"

"I cannot say for certain," was the reply, "but probably by lunch."

The two chatted for a time on other topics, which, however, had a curious tendency to revert to that of Marcelle; and then Carlton went away to nurse his mingled hope and fears.

When the door had closed behind him the one who was left buried his head in his hands. He had done bravely; but there was still a bitter price to pay unless the enemy (how he hated this woman) would take money instead of the "pound of flesh." However, he knew her too well to have great hopes of such a happy alternative being taken. It would have been so easy to have said the few words which would have prevented Carlton pursuing his suit. Perhaps it would not have mattered to Marcelle after all, and he tried to persuade himself, vainly however, that it would have been so. Till Carlton came in he had been looking forward to the day after to-morrow eagerly as was always the case when Marcelle was away from him; and now all this was

changed, and he dreaded it more than could be expressed. A few hours then and she probably would virtually, though not actually, pass out of his care into that of another. And to purchase her happiness there was for him at the end of the *impasse* the spectre of a short-lived passion.

Had the Closerie des Lilas been open he would have gone there after dinner, which, contrary to his usual custom when Marcelle was away, he took at home, hoping to find distraction if not amusement in the riotous dancing of the women, and boisterous gaiety and mad pranks of the students and *étudi-antes*. At least it would have taken his attention away from gloomy thoughts.

But the famous dancing hall was shut that evening, and so he stayed indoors smoking and pretending to read "Sœur Philomène," hoping all the while that Louys or some other friend might drop in to see him as they frequently did.

His hopes were, however, doomed to disappointment, and so, when there was no longer a chance of anyone coming, he turned in, to dream the eccentric dreams of a mind perturbed.

Next day he could do nothing at his picture. Félicie came for the sitting, but he was forced to abandon work, and his doing so caused her to regard and question him anxiously. This man had grown into her life in a purely platonic way, and to see him incapable of work was to her an unmistakable sign that something was seriously amiss. Her romance, like those of many other women of the Quartier in a similar position, had occurred early in her life, before, indeed, she was old enough or experienced enough to protect herself from a disastrous love affair; which, in her case, had left an unhealable scar in place of the usual overwhelming desire to try new experiments.

"It is nothing," replied Brand in answer to her questions. "I'm a little *blasé*, that is all. I can do no more to-day, and so we will go down to Grandet's and have some lunch."

Félicie laughed.

She was a woman, and it seemed nothing less than comical that anyone feeling upset should propose to eat. But men were strange animals. Someone had written, he was not a classic nor was there much wit in

the definition, "Man is compounded of brute and angel. When there is an armistice between these contending parties he is neither. Only insipid." This was suited to her mood and so she adopted the view.

"As you please," she said whilst dressing. "But, *mon ami*, you cannot dupe me. There is something the matter, and my common sense tells me the cause is a woman."

"My dear friend, if you were not so beautiful you might have been more clever. Then there would have been a chance of your arriving at a correct solution without the aid of common sense. Let us not argue, but go forth and see whether Grandet's have not some *sole au gratin* and *ragout de mouton* which will compare with anything one can get in the Quartier."

"*Mon ami*," laughed Félicie tying her white veil with swift fingers at the back of her flower-trimmed chapeau, "you should have been a *chef* and not a painter."

"Both are artists," replied Brand sententially, "and who can say which is the greater, when a good *chef* is paid as liberally as a Minister of War. At all events it is

easier to reach the public through their stomachs than their eyes or mind."

"Nonsense! You are pessimist to-day. What you want is some Veuve Cliquot. I adore Veuve Cliquot. Let us have some, even if we sacrifice the solidity of *ragout de mouton*. Let us go!"

Félicie, like the good comrade she was, tried her best to raise her companion's spirits during the little lunch they had together.

In a measure she succeeded, for the man must be absent-minded indeed who remains insensible to the efforts of a pretty woman, blessed with good spirits and mother wit, to please him. He was even able to forget altogether for a time the letter which was troubling him, and the malicious ultimatum it contained. Marcelle, however, it was not so easy to banish from his thoughts, and his companion, seeming to know instinctively of whom he was thinking, wisely left him alone, until, when he became aware of his neglect of her, he spoke in apology, and the conversation on her part again became instinct with the gossip and life of the Quartier.

So well did she succeed that when they parted, she to visit Constant's *atelier* with

reference to giving some sittings, and Brand to pay a call in the Rue de Monceaux across the Seine, he was in far better mood than he had been since his interview with Carlton.

"If I did not know you, *mon ami*," said Félicie as she shook her head at him on parting at the corner of the Boulevard St. Germain, "I should say that you were in love. But being wealthy," she added mischievously, "I am aware such a thing is a luxury in which you do not indulge. *Au revoir!* In burning incense at the shrine of charming Madame Courcelles this afternoon may you forget your trouble, whatever it may be."

"I am incurable," said Brand with a flash of gaiety.

"Then you need a nurse, and should marry."

With this parting shot Félicie, holding her skirts up daintily at both sides and turning her head over her shoulder to laugh, tripped away along the Boulevard.

CHAPTER VIII

"CANNOT YOU GUESS, DEAR FOOLISH ONE?"

MARCELLE had come back; bright, gay and happy. If there had been a tinge of sadness as the door of the school she loved closed behind her as a scholar for the last time the sunshine and warm clear air had soon dissipated it, and papa's welcome had banished sadness.

They were together in the studio. Brand was working somewhat aimlessly, and Marcelle was alternately reading and watching him, at last she said, "If you don't mind, papa, I think I will sit in the garden. I cannot miss this sunshine, and you must come out later on and have a pipe. Cannot you leave off work and come now?"

"I must finish what I am doing," replied Brand, knowing well that as soon as she was gone to her accustomed seat under the linden at the end of the garden he would throw down his brushes and sit thinking and lis-

tening for the sound of Carlton's footsteps coming along the passage and then across the polished floor of the salon. "But you go, *ma mie*. Certainly, it will do you more good than stopping in here this beautiful afternoon amid the smell of turpentine and *fixatif*. I will come presently, perhaps."

Marcelle disappeared through the window, turning ere she ran across the grass to kiss her finger tips to Brand standing gazing after her from before his easel.

She could scarcely have more than reached her shady seat and comfortably settled herself to read her book, ere the sound of some one approaching the salon sent a chill to Brand's heart.

Carlton entered at the heels of Marie who announced him. He came forward, smiling, to shake hands, and Brand noticed that he was rather pale. "She has come back," he said, "Marie informed me."

And then as Brand made no remark he asked rather anxiously, "You have no objection to offer to my speaking to her to-day, M'sieu Georges?"

The latter did not reply at once.

Again that terrible temptation closed in

upon him. Just to say a word or two, and the young fellow who was possibly about to rob him of the thing he cared for most in the whole world, would turn away and Marcelle would never know what he had intended. Carlton would be cut up at first, no doubt. But he would get over the affair in time, and in future days perhaps even thank him for his candour. Who could tell? But then there was Marcelle; and her figure flashed up before him. What if she cared? What if she should come to him and tell all her trouble? Pain that he had inflicted. It would not do. No, it would not do. If she was precious to him, should he not rather seek her happiness at all costs? He was getting old. She was young. What if he should be the means of saddening beyond hope of cure the life which was but just then beginning? He would be what—? A man guilty of dishonour, of breach of trust. But beyond all this he would be a miserable man, one of those beings whose inmost soul was destined to be tortured with undying remorse.

"Oh, M'sieu Georges, you can surely have nothing to say to me, nothing sad to

communicate," exclaimed Carlton, alarmed by his companion's prolonged silence.

Brand turned away and said in as steady a voice as he could command,

"Forgive me, Geoffrey. No, I have nothing to say. Marcelle is in the garden, you had better go to her."

When Carlton had gone he sat down wearily. At that moment he looked already an old man, though only just at life's zenith. Outside the sun shone brilliantly, and the birds were singing in the confines of the garden, but he did not see the sunshine, nor hear the song. He felt none of the elation which is supposed to be experienced in doing right. On the contrary, a darkness seemed to hem him in as he sat there blankly staring away into space. Mathilde would have had some of her revenge, after all, if she could have seen him.

He did not know how long he sat thus, but he was at last startled by Carlton's voice, very low and husky, speaking to him.

He had not heard anyone enter, and he glanced up as though expecting to see Marcelle standing at the speaker's side.

He was alone, however, and a single

glance sufficed to tell Brand that something untoward had happened.

The young fellow held out his hand as he rose hurriedly from his seat.

"It is no use," he exclaimed brokenly, "I ought to have known it. I cannot stay to thank you for your kindness, dear M'sieu Georges, but I shall ever remember it. I am leaving for London to-night for a time at least. Some day I may come back to the Quartier, and, perhaps be brave enough to be glad if I find Mademoiselle happy with some one else she may care for. Anyway, good-bye for the present, dear M'sieu Brand. It was, after all, presumption on my part to fancy that she could care for me. She, whom anyone would be proud to call his wife. But I shall treasure the memory of her friendship as the brightest and most precious thing in my life. I only ask that she may have a happy future, and that I may accept defeat like a man. Once more good-bye, dear M'sieu Georges."

Brand took the proffered hand as though he were in a dream. And ere he could collect his thoughts sufficiently to reply to Carlton the latter had gone.

Left alone his brain seemed in a whirl. Was it really true then? Was it not rather some miracle which had thus restored to him his Marcelle, and at the same time laid for ever the spectre of a woman's vengeance which had risen up to menace him?

He sank down into his chair overcome with relief and happiness, to reason it all out if he were able.

Before he could recover his composure and collect his scattered thoughts a pair of soft arms were twining round his neck, and a face wet with recent tears lay lightly against his own.

"*Ma pauvre Marcelle*," he said gently, realising who it was. "Why did you send him away, *ma mie*?"

In the last half-hour the woman had fully emerged from the chrysalis state of girlhood.

"Are you sorry? Did you want me to go?" she asked quietly.

"No; a thousand times, no! But why did you send him away?"

"Because I did not love him," was the answer, spoken firmly, but low.

"Not love him!" exclaimed Brand, blankly.

There was no reply for a moment or two to this. Then, with a little sob, the woman in her cried out, almost as though in physical pain, "Oh, won't you see? Cannot you guess?"

The fair head was hidden, half ashamed at the avowal, on the man's shoulder.

The gates of Paradise were unlocked.

Surely they were unlocked to him at last. He put one arm round her neck, and she slid to her knees beside his chair.

What mattered years of waiting? Toil counted now as nothing. All the sacrifice as less than nothing. All the pain and agony of mind of past hours were swept away, and the studio suddenly seemed as though flooded with ambient radiance.

"*Ma chère, ma chère!*" he cried again and again. "Is it true that you love me? Tell me that it is true."

The woman was the first to break the intensity of the situation.

"I am going to kiss you," she said at length, almost gaily, taking his face, transfigured by happiness, between her smooth, slender hands, "as I used to do. Oh, foolish one, blind, dear foolish one, did you not

know why I could not kiss you lately, as I used when a child? Poor, foolish papa! Why were eyes which watched me so closely, which anticipated any wish of mine so swiftly, this once so terribly blind and unseeing?"

Then, as he still remained silent, from the mere intensity of his happiness, she continued, with a sudden and dainty affectation of imperiousness, "Now let me hear you say, '*Ma chère*, I will always love you, *ma mie*. Love you for ever, always.'"

"Love you for ever, always, my Marcelle" said the man, clasping her in his strong, protecting arms.

CHAPTER IX

THE PLOT THAT FAILED

ABOUT eight o'clock the next evening Mathilde Sievinski was dressing to go out, when her maid brought in a letter. On seeing the writing her mistress threw down the powder puff, with which she was dusting her cheeks, on to the dressing-table and tore open the envelope eagerly.

The letter it contained was very brief, and ran thus:—

“MADAME,

“I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of Madame's communication, and to inform her that Mademoiselle Marcelle Bonheur has done me the honour to accept my hand. Madame will therefore understand that the suggestion made in her letter that I should seal her lips by marriage is

rendered by this happy circumstance impossible and unnecessary.

"I have, Madame, the honour to remain,
"GEORGE BRAND."

So the game was up!

She tore the letter across and across savagely, as though in doing so she was rending the flesh of that other woman, and after a few minutes of impotent and silent rage she laughed harshly and then continued dressing for her visit to the Folies Bergères.

As she stuck the long pins with their flashing paste heads into her bizarre, be-feathered hat, she said to herself bitterly, "The man who wrote 'Revenge is always worth waiting for' was a fool. Let us hope some clever woman made a bigger one of him."

A week or two later, whilst she sat sipping *absinthe* outside one of the numerous cafés, in the region of the Place Blanche, Mathilde read of the marriage which the impressionable scribe, who contributed the "special" to the *Figaro*, stated, in glowing terms would place the Quartier *en fête* on the morrow.

There had been no reason why Brand and

Marcelle should wait. Her father, who had been no father to her, had passed out of the circle of life known as the Quartier Latin unmourned, almost unknown. And if from a conventional standpoint, she was over young to be wed, that consideration it was understood, weighed light as thistledown amid the gaiety and irresponsibility of the district in which love counted for so much, and prudence for so very little.

The wedding of Brand and Marcelle had just that touch of romance which the Quartier was best able to appreciate. The ceremony before the *maire* was attended by crowds of well-wishers, humble and mighty in the world of Art. And that across the Seine in the Embassy Church, by many members of the Anglo-American colony, with a large sprinkling of theatrical and musical celebrities. The true sons of the Quartier contented themselves mostly with blocking the narrow street by which the entrance to the church is approached. Students from the Beaux Arts, big tied, shabby-coated and hilarious; others from the private studios in evolutionary stages of Bohemianism made patent to the seeing eye by the newness or otherwise

of their hats and general attire ; *étudiantes* and models, chaffing their *bons amis*, and gay or shabby in dress according to the present state of their friends' exchequers, or the demand for their services by artists.

The carriages, which waited to convey the wedding party to Suresnes, blocked the street where spectators were not crushed in close ranks.

At length the notes of the organ playing the wedding march sounded through the open windows of the building, and the stolid-faced official whose duty it was pulled back the bolt with a rattle, and opened the door, into which some of the craning spectators were immediately crushed by those standing behind. The two gendarmes pulled them out none too gently, and failing to find standing space for them on the pavement thrust them, sometimes struggling in protest, between the horses' legs into the street behind the line of carriages.

At last they came. Brand upright, radiant ; Marcelle lovely, smiling, and clinging yet timidly to his arm.

"Vive Monsieur et Madame !"

"Vive les mariés !"

“Vive Georges Brand et sa jolie femme!”

Amid these cries, which elicited smiling acknowledgments from both, marking out the degrees of intimacy or interest of the shouters, the carriage drove slowly down the street into the wider Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré on its way to the leafy, sunlit Bois.

The crowd regarded the occupants of the other carriages, as they drove away, more or less indolently. They had had a good sight of the married pair, and that was what they principally cared about.

A well-known actress aroused a spark or two of interest, an ex-ambassador passed unnoticed, then the crowd soon melted away, and the Rue Aguesseau took upon itself the double emptiness of finished festivity.

THE END





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